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LONDON SOCIETY.

A Monthly Magazine

OF

LIGHT AND AMUSING LITERATURE

FOR

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VOLUME LV.

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LONDON SOCIETY.

JANUARY, 1889.

“SHEBA.”

A STUDY OF GIRLHOOD.

By “RITA,”

AUTHOR OF “DAME DURDEN,” “DARBY AND JOAN,” “THE LADY NANCY,”
“GRETCHEN,” ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XVI.

“THE FALL OF THE REAPER’S SCYTHE.”

IT seemed strange to Noel Hill to think of May as a winter month, but after a long spell of tropical heat and heavy rain-falls and terrific storms, he found himself acknowledging that it was by far the pleasantest month of the year.

He had become used to his quiet life and its daily round of duties. His health had visibly improved and he told Sheba laughingly that he trusted his case was not to be one of the “usual” ones she had so cheered him by citing as fatal.

His interest in his young pupil only increased as time went on, and his influence over her was extraordinary as well as beneficial. With his teaching on the one hand and Aunt Allison’s womanly counsel and tenderness on the other, Sheba could not but improve. The Saxtons had done her good in many ways, but all the devotion of her heart was lavished on Aunt Allison, who was her ideal of all that was perfect in womanhood.

It was growing towards dusk one May evening—the evening of Sheba’s fourteenth birthday—and she was sitting on a low stool before the bright wood fire, expecting the arrival of Bessie and her aunt who were to spend it with her.

She had not seen them for some time, for visits were not so frequent since the weather had been less certain, and as the fire flames played over the rich dark red of her frock—her father’s present—she was wondering a little what Bessie would think of it, and if she would say she was a little less ugly in it than in

most of her gowns. That had been her mother's verdict when the frock had been put on—her father having had it made up by a Sydney dressmaker, a piece of extravagance which Mrs. Ormatroyd could not bring herself to approve.

The fire flushed her cheeks and played on the rich colour of the dress and the soft tumbled waves of hair which still fell loose about her forehead, and softened the irregular outlines of her face.

On the rug at her feet lay the pretty goat chewing the cud in a lazy, contented fashion, and occasionally rubbing his head against his young mistress's knee.

Mrs. Ormatroyd was in the kitchen superintending the making of scones, and various other comestibles which were destined for tea, and not to be safely trusted to the skill of the Australian domestic.

It still wanted a quarter of an hour to the time fixed for the Saxtons' arrival, and Sheba was luxuriating in a spell of rest and quietude.

The room looked at its best, though Sheba despaired of ever making it anything like that drawing-room at the Crow's Nest.

She was quite unaware what a picture she made there in the firelight—quite unaware that two eyes, grave, distressed, pain-filled, were contemplating the picture and that their owner shrank from disturbing it, even while the sternness of necessity made itself heard like an audible voice and told him he had no choice but to do it.

"She has courage," he thought; "she will bear it better than her mother . . . but how hard it seems to break in upon her now."

Suddenly the goat lifted its head and looked towards the door. Sheba turned in the same direction and saw the figure of Noel Hill. She sprang to her feet.

"So you have come after all," she cried eagerly; "and you told me this morning you could not. Come near the fire—won't you? It must be blind man's holiday, for mother said I was not to light the lamp till she came in from the kitchen."

She stirred the fire as she spoke and drew a chair up to it. Noel Hill advanced slowly and as he came within the light of the blazing logs she saw his face was very pale and troubled.

"What is the matter?" she asked quickly. "Are you ill?"

"No," he said, looking sadly at her. "Oh, no—only I have heard some bad news."

"Ah," said Sheba; "it is mail day. I never like it. If father or mother get letters from England they are always miserable, and if they don't they are always cross. You have had a letter; I can see that—and now you are miserable."

He did not smile as she had expected, and he did not answer her speech except by a question.

"Where is your mother?" he asked, and so grave was his voice,

so strange his face, that Sheba felt there must be some weighty cause for anxiety.

"In the kitchen," she said. "I told you so before. Do you wish to see her?"

"No," he said; "not yet. I—I have something to say to you first. Sheba, try and be a brave little girl. I know it is in you, if you make the effort."

She turned very pale, but she looked straight at him.

"Please tell me," she said; "it can't be very bad. Mother is all right, and Hex—and father——"

Something in his eyes as she said that word struck to her heart like a pang. Involuntarily her own turned to the pretty frock, then flashed up in terror and dread.

"Is it—father?" she said hoarsely. "Has anything happened—is he—ill?"

Noel Hill took her hands in both his own. "Poor child," he said tenderly. "Poor little Sheba—it is your first real grief. But for your mother's sake—for Hex, who is so young—try to bear it. Your father died this morning quite suddenly. They are bringing him home. I only heard it at the ferry and hurried here to—to prepare you. Oh, my poor child—what can I do for you?"

She had swayed towards the low wooden mantelshelf, and supported herself against it while her eyes rested wide and horror-filled on his pitying face.

"Dead," she faltered. "I—I can't believe it. People don't die like that—so suddenly. They are ill a long, long time. He—why, only this morning he kissed me. It was my birthday, you know—and look, he gave me this," and she pointed to her frock. "He said I was growing up now and it was time I looked like a young lady—and I have put it on to show him, and do you mean to say he will never *see* it after all—never speak to me as he spoke this morning? Oh! it can't be true!"

"Hush," said Noel Hill, holding up his hand warningly. "Didn't you hear the gate? Oh, Sheba, your mother—think of your mother. Who is to tell her?"

She drew herself up, cold, rigid, white. She looked at him now without appeal. There was something almost tragic in the repressed grief of her face—the passionate terror of her eyes.

"Then—it *is* true," she whispered. "It is *death*—that they are bringing—death."

"Yes," he said compassionately. "There was no time to warn—to prepare."

"It would have been the same," she said, "the same—whatever the warning. Must I—tell mother?"

"Have you the courage?" he asked, wondering that she had shed no tear, but knowing full well how deep and terrible a thing suppressed grief might be, as he met those tragic eyes from which no childish soul would ever look out again.

She bent her head for a moment on the low wooden shelf. One dry choking sob escaped her lips. Then, with a supreme effort, she lifted her face and shook back the cloud of dusky hair.

"I think I have—courage," she said slowly. "But she will say I cannot feel."

Noel Hill knew that was more than probable, but he felt it was better the news should come from Sheba than from himself. He led her to the door. The sound of approaching wheels, the click of the gate, made her shudder convulsively.

Death to her was as yet—an unknown terror . . . but she felt that what was now being borne across the threshold could not and never had been her father. The sound of the feet made her turn sick and cold. Her first impulse was to rush wildly into the kitchen and cry out the horror of her news, but something stronger than impulse had sprung to life within her heart, and held her in its stern compelling grasp.

She crossed the passage and opened the back door, the cold air struck keen and chill on her face as she moved mechanically across the yard to where the lights of the kitchen were streaming out in a warm bright glow through the open door.

She went in and stood for a moment looking at the pile of fragrant cakes, and crisp brown scones, and at Mrs. Ormatroyd's fair comely face all flushed with exertion and conscious pride.

"Now, Sheba, child, what brings you here? Have the Saxtons come?"

"Mother," said the girl gently, "come with me, please. Mr. Hill is in the drawing-room. He—he wants to speak to you."

"Oh I can't be bothered just now," snapped Mrs. Ormatroyd. "It can't be anything important."

"You must come," said Sheba decidedly. "Father . . . he has come to tell you . . . that father was taken suddenly ill . . . and . . ."

"Ill!" Mrs. Ormatroyd turned round sharply. "What a nuisance—and to-night too, just as I am so busy. That is so like a man!"

Sheba recoiled involuntarily. "He could not help it," she said. "Won't you come? I am afraid it is very serious."

Mrs. Ormatroyd whisked the last scone out of the oven, snatched off her apron and wiped her hands, grumbling audibly all the time, and looking indignantly at her daughter as if she had been instrumental in bringing about this catastrophe.

Five minutes later she was in raging hysterics beside the body of her dead husband.

CHAPTER XVII.

GATHERING CLOUDS.

"AND his salary dies with him," cried Mrs. Ormatroyd. "And he never would insure his life. We are all ruined!"

It was the morning after that terrible night. A night destined to mark an epoch in Sheba's life and make her shudder at the very name of "birthday" from that time forward. Her mother had passed from one fit of hysterics into another, and it had needed all the girl's self-command to bear with the scene. Aunt Allison had remained all night, having sent Bessie home under the care of Noel Hill; but Mrs. Ormatroyd had persisted in clinging to Sheba in her intervals of consciousness, and the poor child had not dared to stir from the room.

It was early days for so sad an experience. Early days to feel that all her past life was slipping from her grasp into a dim and shadowy background, and Mrs. Ormatroyd's first conscious words served but to seal her daughter's forebodings.

"Ruined!" Sheba wondered what would become of them now. They had never had more than just sufficient to make "both ends meet;" never known a superfluous luxury, or for the matter of that anything deserving the name of "luxury" at all. But if even the small means they had were to end with this calamity, what would become of them?

Little as she knew of the practical side of life, she felt that money must be had to carry on any sort of existence, and here was her mother deciding that they had absolutely none.

She sat there in mute wretchedness listening to these wails and lamentations—listening too to Aunt Allison's calm and cheering voice, and wondering how she could talk of comfort as even possible.

"Everything must be sold," wailed Mrs. Ormatroyd with dreary reiteration. "Everything—my jewellery . . . my diamonds, my poor mamma's gift . . . Oh, what would she say if she could see me now?"

"But she's dead," said Sheba brusquely. "So of course she doesn't know anything about it."

"Yes, she is dead," moaned Mrs. Ormatroyd. "Ah, well indeed that heaven has taken her before ever she could see this day, and her daughter brought to ruin and left desolate in a foreign land!"

She burst into fresh weeping, and Sheba rose half-impatiently and went over to the window and threw back the shutters to let some light and air into the darkened room.

"What are you doing?" screamed her mother. "You heartless,

forgetful girl! How can you let the light in, and a death in the house! Close the shutters directly."

Sheba looked round somewhat bewildered. "Do you mean to say," she exclaimed, "that because poor papa is dead—we are to keep all the rooms in darkness?"

"Certainly," said Mrs. Ormatroyd, sitting up in bed and putting her handkerchief to her eyes to shut out the sacrilegious light that dared to intrude on the self-inflicted gloom of grief. "Do you suppose that because I have been buried alive all these years in an uncivilized land like this, that I have forgotten the decencies of civilized life? No, thank God. Trying as my lot has been, and will be, I can never forget how I was brought up!"

"Well," said Sheba brusquely, as she closed the shutters, "I have not been 'brought up' among dead bodies, so I don't know what they call etiquette."

"You are an unfeeling, worthless girl!" cried Mrs. Ormatroyd, dropping her handkerchief. "I don't believe you have shed one single tear for your poor father! And look at you in that flaring scarlet dress. You might really have had the decency to change it after what has happened."

"She has not had time," interposed Aunt Allison gently. "She has never left this room all night."

"Well—she may go now," said Mrs. Ormatroyd pettishly. "And when you have changed your frock," she added, "you can make me some tea. Perhaps it will revive me."

Sheba left the room in a stony quiet way. It was quite true she had not shed a tear. She felt too cold and numbed; the suddenness and horror of grief had paralyzed the easy channel of tears, and seemed to hold her in a chill and icy grasp from which she could not free herself.

She went straight to the room where they had laid her father. She had not yet found courage to look on the face that had seemed so kind and hearty only one short day before. She had no conception of death, yet she felt an awe and terror of what it would be like, and she hesitated for long beside the narrow bed where that sheeted form lay outlined in a stillness the like of which she had never beheld or even imagined.

When she lifted the white covering at last and looked on the quiet face, her heart seemed to stand still. She was not afraid—but the mystery and strangeness of that marble brow, those closed eyes and mute pale lips, touched her with such awe that she lost herself in depth of wonderment. "Where is he now?" she thought. "This is not—father . . . I never saw him look like that! Can he see me, I wonder? Does he look down and know that this was once—himself? That those lips kissed me but yesterday . . . Oh, father . . . father, I was not half fond enough of you when you were here . . . not half good enough—and now——"

She threw herself down and the tears rushed to her eyes. "Now," she sobbed passionately, "I can never reach you . . . never tell you I am sorry . . . never sit on your knee, or feel your arms round me. Oh, death is cruel . . . cruel! How do I know I shall ever see you . . . How am I to find you, if—if even I go where you are! And it won't be the same! If you are an angel I should feel afraid of you . . . I could not be your own little girl like I was—here . . ."

She sobbed so bitterly that she soon grew exhausted; and finally she sank down on the floor with her head leaning against the bed and there fell into a deep sleep.

Mrs. Ormatroyd grew tired of waiting for her tea, and Aunt Allison went to look for Sheba. She had not the heart to disturb the poor child, so made the tea herself and took it to the bereaved widow, who expatiated on its delay as another proof of Sheba's heartlessness.

"Whatever is to become of that child?" she moaned. "As if my trial was not heavy enough without such a daughter. Hex is my only comfort. He has never given me an hour's anxiety—but Sheba——"

"At all events Hex went to bed comfortably last night," said Aunt Allison dryly, "and took good care to have his breakfast this morning. Sheba never left your side. Nor has she tasted food since midday yesterday. You can scarcely wonder she is exhausted now."

"I hope," said Mrs. Ormatroyd, whose ideas were always consistent, "that she has changed her frock. Don't let her come near me again in that glaring scarlet thing! I said it was a waste of money when her father bought it, and my words have proved true . . . of course it must be put away now . . . and she must be in mourning for a year. I think it is a year for a parent, is it not? . . . Yes, I wore black a year for poor dear mamma—I remember quite well. And it was summer too, and oh, the heat of that crape! But I have never flinched from duty—never . . . Oh—if poor Sheba had only taken after me . . . and as I was saying that dress will have to be put away for a year . . . and by then I suppose she will have grown out of it. What a pity it was made up."

Allison Saxton turned away and set down her empty cup on the tray.

"Poor Sheba," she thought. "I pity her from the bottom of my heart."

* * * * *

It is strange what a morbid pleasure some people take in making death even more dreary than it naturally is.

Sheba felt instinctively that anger ought to have no place in her heart at such a time, but she could not always "command

her soul in patience" when Mrs. Ormatroyd posed as a suffering martyr, and oscillated between fits of hysterics and useless reproaches at the dead man's inconsiderate behaviour.

The fact of his loss seemed to the girl to dwarf into mere insignificance the value of furniture, and china, and jewellery.

Mrs. Ormatroyd persisted that everything must be sold and that she would have to work henceforth to support her children, for which purpose she made as many vague plans as there were hours in the day. She would be a governess—a teacher of music—a working housekeeper—a domestic servant—the keeper of a school—the superintendent of a hospital, and so on—each scheme as it occurred to her being eagerly discussed and then found impracticable.

She seemed to resent the fact of her husband's death as severely as if he had voluntarily chosen the time and place of his decease, and though she would weep floods of tears every time his name was mentioned, she never lost sight of the fact that *she* was the chief sufferer, and expected to be considered as such.

Hex and Sheba took counsel together over matters and wondered whether it would not be possible for them to earn their own livelihood and thereby release the disconsolate widow from at least one burden. But when they hinted at such a thing they only opened fresh floodgates of tears and were alternately scolded and caressed as "poor dear ignorant children" who knew nothing of the world, or what life and its duties really meant.

But those dreary days came to an end, and Mr. Ormatroyd was buried in the quiet little churchyard that Sheba had often wandered through, with such curiosity and conjecture.

The widow did not attend. She remained shut up in her darkened room with the bible, Thomas à Kempis, and a bottle of sal volatile as companions.

Miss Saxton came up in the afternoon and wanted to take Sheba back with her to the Crow's Nest, but Mrs. Ormatroyd was so scandalized at the suggestion that it had to be dropped. The etiquette of mourning had to be observed even in the wilds of the bush, and Sheba was condemned to sit by her mother's side and read Thomas à Kempis at intervals during the afternoon by way of paying proper respect to her father's memory; while Billy bleated mournfully in the yard for his young mistress in the irreverent fashion of ignorance that fails to comprehend or excuse any departure from the ordinary routine of life.

If it had not been for Aunt Allison, Sheba would have been indeed miserable, but she stayed on till the evening, when Mr. Saxton arrived. He had not yet seen Mrs. Ormatroyd and he felt that something must really be decided as to her and her children's future.

A small portion of Mr. Ormatroyd's salary had been due at the time of his decease, and this was at once paid over by the firm.

Mr. Saxton had, however, to explain that even with extreme economy this could not keep them for a longer period than three months, and then to stem the torrent of Mrs. Ormatroyd's tearful laments, and present to her a way out of her present difficulty.

The head of the firm of merchants in whose employment Mr. Ormatroyd had been for the last three years, was a widower with an only daughter, a child of four or five years. He was in need of a lady who would undertake the superintendence of his household and see that his daughter was not quite at the mercy of servants—such specimens as find their way to the Australian colonies being indeed a class altogether impossible to describe with anything like poetic justice.

He offered a salary of £100 a year, and had asked Mr. Saxton to propose the matter to the widow of his deceased clerk before advertising for any one else in the papers.

"Do not decide too hastily," said Mr. Saxton in conclusion. "You will have a comfortable home and be able to pay for Hex's schooling and clothes. As for Sheba she must come to us for a year or two until we see how matters go. Expense! Phoooh! She doesn't eat more than a bird, and as for her dresses it will be hard if we can't manage to supply them out of Bessie's superfluous wardrobe. Mr. Payne will take Hesketh to board with him—you can spare £50 out of your salary for his food, clothes and education, I suppose. Now what do you say to the offer?"

It can scarcely be supposed that Mrs. Ormatroyd was the kind of woman to adopt suggestions, however reasonable, without first putting forth objections. She invented these with a facility for which Mr. Saxton had really not given her credit. As fast as one was combated, another took its place. Sheba, who had to sit there passive and mute, felt that there could be limits to patience, and that Mr. Saxton might well be excused for telling her mother bluntly that if she had nothing on her side to suggest, it would be as well for her to cease opposing what was a really feasible and kindly meant way out of her present difficulties.

This being an unanswerable argument it was received with floods of tears, which made the kind-hearted Englishman feel he had been brutal. He therefore took an abrupt leave, murmuring apologies and condolences with more zeal than coherence, only whispering to Sheba to do her best to persuade her mother to think well over the matter for her children's sake, if not for her own.

The girl looked at him somewhat hopelessly. She wondered in a vague and helpless way whether he really thought she, or any other mortal, could persuade her mother to do anything which did not suit her own inclinations and yet be cited as an incontrovertible proof of marvellous unselfishness.

Of course by the next morning Mrs. Ormatroyd had decided to

accept the £100 a year, and to pose as a martyr on the strength of it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"ONE HAPPY YEAR."

"OUT of evil comes good," thought Sheba as she found herself at last established at the Crow's Nest with all her treasured belongings. Billy was here, and her pet cat, and Vic, her own ugly little rough terrier. The fowls and pigeons had been sold, so had the furniture, pictures and plate; but Sheba had kept possession of her cherished books and cared very little for the loss of the "household gods" over which Mrs. Ormatroyd had shed such bitter tears.

It seemed strange to the girl to contemplate the altered circumstances of her life—to think that she was now an inmate of the house which had so often excited her envy—to hear Aunt Allison's kindly welcome and the girls' rapture and Mr. Saxton's cheerful greeting—to be kissed, and caressed, and made much of—to be led into the cool, pretty chamber which the girls' loving hands had decorated for her—and on all sides to receive a sister's welcome. Mr. Saxton had even arranged that Hex should come over every Saturday and stay till Monday, so that there was absolutely a vista of unclouded happiness opening before the girl's eyes and calling up a mist of grateful tears as she sat in the pretty sitting-room among that kindly group and heard the plans made for her comfort and her pleasure.

It was—to Sheba—such an altogether novel sensation to be considered in any way, or form, that she was almost bewildered by so much attention.

Keenly as she had felt her sorrow, bitterly as she still regretted the kindly, if somewhat careless, father, for whom life was now an ended tale, she was too young not to shake off the weight and clog of heavy grief, under the influence of brightness, and the novelty of kind and cheerful society.

The sorrows of childhood are intense while they last, but, thank God, they do not last. Stormy and dark and passionate as the clouds on an April sky—like the clouds they are soon dispelled by sunshine, by the imperative need for joy and light and happiness, which takes so little to supply, so much to quench.

Sheba had the prospects of a happy year before her. Noel Hill would still teach her. In the winter she was to walk to the Parsonage twice a week; the other days he would come to the Crow's Nest. Mr. Saxton had decided that Bessie would also be the better of some instruction at his hands, and the two girls were to carry on their studies together.

It seemed to Sheba as if nothing was wanting to complete her

happiness. Naturally she ought to have felt sorrow and regret at her mother's absence; but Mrs. Ormatroyd had always treated her as a "thorn in the flesh," and it was scarcely to be expected that the girl should feel regretful at the absence of eternal scoldings, worryings, and fault-finding. Besides, Mr. Saxton had assured her that her mother's situation was rather enviable than otherwise. The gentleman to whom she had given her valuable services was one of the magnates of Sydney, and she would live in comparative luxury and ease—and could always console herself with a grievance—if she deemed it necessary—by dwelling on the deprivation of her children's society.

"I think," said Mr. Saxton with a twinkle in his eye, "that your mother really likes a grievance. Some women do."

Sheba drank her tea and pondered the matter over in her heart, but did not commit herself to the actual disrespect of an opinion on her mother's character. Quiet as she was to-night, her feelings were strung to an unusually high tension. She was thinking of how hard she would study—how eagerly she would learn—how steadily she would try to fit herself for some career of independence. She had never, even by a thought, dishonoured the Saxtons' kindly and heartily given hospitality by calling it "charity." Mrs. Ormatroyd had done so, but Sheba took it for what it was, and in her full and passionate gratitude she felt that nothing could ever repay it.

She wondered why they were so good to her and so fond of her, and the wonder made her heart glow and her eyes brim over with tears; but she felt too thoroughly convinced both of the goodness and the affection to attribute them to pity for her forlorn situation.

She soon discovered that the home life at the Saxtons' was a very different thing to what her own had been, and that Aunt Allison was its very core and centre.

No one was checked or repressed—never was a harsh word uttered. Innocent and spontaneous as the children's own thoughts, was the mirth that enlivened, and the love that crowned their days. Fun, mischief, gaiety—the natural outcome of youth and light-heartedness were entered into by their elders and encouraged by them as much as possible. To Sheba it was all novel and delightful, and she only wondered why Bessie would persist in keeping up her ladylike airs and affectations in the face of so much that was simple and pleasant and natural. Yet she was very fond of Bessie, and had never conquered that idea that she was to be the friend of her heart. She felt there was good in the girl beneath that veneer of selfishness and affectation, and for those defects she blamed her school life and companions more than the girl herself. If anything would knock them out of her it would be this unconventional, free and easy life here in the bush, as Mrs. Ormatroyd designated their surroundings.

Bessie seemed fond of Sheba also in a protective, patronizing sort of way, but she would have preferred a more yielding character and one more in sympathy with her own latitudinarian ideas of life. Still, as the winter passed quietly on, she found that Sheba's companionship was becoming almost a necessity to her, for the difference in years between the two girls was more than bridged by the mental precocity of the younger.

With that first shock of grief, that first insight into the real sorrows of life, Sheba had put all things of childhood away from her for ever. She had felt the heavy hand of misfortune, and she could never again forget its touch, or look out on the sunshine without a pang of remembered cares. In after years, when she looked back at this turning point of her life, she wondered to herself what it really would have meant for her but for the influence of the Saxtons, and specially the influence and charm of Aunt Allison's companionship.

It was not a thing to be defined, neither could the girl have described it; but she felt its effect, and its benefit too, long, long after their life paths had diverged, and a dark and bitter struggle had wrung their hearts and tested their affection.

It was no wonder if under such totally different auspices, Sheba's nature expanded both mentally and physically.

Her aptitude for learning was something wonderful, and she astonished Noel Hill by avowing a preference for really useful and necessary subjects—by attending strictly to penmanship itself as well as to what it conveyed—by studying history, grammar, geography and such like useful branches of learning, as well as the Latin and Greek and composition she loved so dearly.

In the career she had marked out for herself, she knew she could not afford to dispense with these necessary, if uninteresting studies, and Noel Hill could not but admire the stern and uncompromising fashion in which she set to work to master them thoroughly.

Bessie was a very *dilettante* sort of student, and more bent upon impressing her personal charms upon her teacher than attending to his instructions. How he could continue deaf and blind to them was a marvel to her, and occasionally put her into a very bad temper. At such times he simply ignored her. She was too old for reprimands or punishments, so he left her to overcome her petulant folly as she pleased.

Sheba, on the other hand, was keenly—almost too keenly—alive to praise or blame. She had been so long repressed, so long accustomed to her mother's depreciation and her father's good-humoured indifference, that now she found her capacities recognized and her abilities acknowledged, she could scarcely believe in herself as the same snubbed, derided and cross-grained Sheba of a year ago.

The reaction was natural enough. Miss Saxton had expected

it and indeed urged her brother to interfere on the poor child's behalf. She had recognized the fine qualities in her character and seen very clearly that they would be either stunted or trained in direct opposition to their natural bent if she was left to her mother's system of education and discipline, and as time went on, and Sheba grew both mentally and physically strong, gentle, and clear-sighted, she congratulated herself on the change, for she was as fond of the girl as of her own nieces.

Of any other world than the world she had read of in books, Sheba was as ignorant as a child, and when Allison Saxton spoke to her of trial, of temptation, of the conflict to be waged between duty and inclination, she but vaguely understood these terms in their relative application to the serious side of life.

Her soul had been made up of longings and desires, but this year of peace and love and tender influences had lulled it into satisfied quiescence. She dimly fancied that such quiescence would content her always, that those troublesome passionate cravings had been dismissed just as her boyish sweethearts had been dismissed, that the one would trouble her as little as the other henceforward, that she had found her work in life and would only have to execute it, leaving out of the question its distastefulness or results.

But Allison Saxton knew better. The soul that looked out of those deep, unchildish eyes was no common soul, and often and often she found herself speculating as to the girl's future, as to that common fate of womanhood which would make or mar her life.

It had gone near to mar her own, and that sweet face and placid brow of hers masked a very sad and sorely-tried heart, and it was the memory of her own girlhood that gave her so deep an insight into Sheba's, the thought of her own sufferings that made her so pitiful and tender to the youth around her.

She said something of this once to Mr. Saxton when they were discussing the girl, and her changed appearance and character.

"Phoooh!" he said, "she will be all right. She's not pretty enough for men to spoil her with too much attention, and if she ever cares for one, he is sure to be some musty old bookworm who will charm her with his stores of erudition."

Aunt Allison laughed. "You don't understand Sheba," she said. "She has a poet's fervent romantic heart, and life won't be easy for her I feel sure. The very fact of her own lack of physical charms will make it harder. Not all the intellect in the world will satisfy the cravings of a woman's heart, or alter her nature. Sheba's nature is one to take things far too seriously."

"You are fond of the girl?" questioned Mr. Saxton suddenly.

"Very. There is so much character in her. I am constantly speculating as to what her life will be."

"Oh," said Mr. Saxton lightly, "those young things aren't

worth speculating about. She is happy enough now, why shouldn't she remain so?"

"Why?"—Miss Saxton smiled sadly. "Dear Joseph, does life ever stand still, unless one absolutely stagnates? Sheba will never do that."

"Does she ever speak to you about leaving us?" he asked.

"Yes, now and then. She wants to go to Sydney to be a governess and support her mother and herself independently. That is why she studies so hard; in two years time she thinks she will be quite prepared. She has been with us nearly one, you know."

Mr. Saxton laughed. "Phooh," he said. "What nonsense. Why, she's only a child now. As for her mother, I'm not at all sure, Allison, that the charming widow is not contemplating a new matrimonial venture. The last time I was at Levison's place I thought he was very devoted. Of course Mrs. Ormatroyd will call the change 'sacrificial,' and only make it for the sake of her children; but all the same she will make it, or I am very much mistaken."

Miss Saxton's fair sweet face coloured softly. "Oh," she said, "I hope she won't. It doesn't seem right or decent for a woman to have two husbands, especially when she has children."

"My dear," said her brother, "your views on the matter are somewhat obsolete. I shouldn't advise you to confide them to Mrs. Ormatroyd."

"I don't like her well enough to confide in her," said Allison Saxton warmly. "She has always seemed to me an intensely selfish woman with an inordinate amount of vanity. Everything she does, or ever has done, is perfection in her own eyes, and no one ought to attempt to think the contrary. The way Sheba was brought up, was enough to ruin any girl's disposition."

"I wonder," said Mr. Saxton, as he bade his sister good-night, "what she will say to a step-father."

* * * * *

Meanwhile Sheba, in happy ignorance of the honour in store for her, lived her own quiet, studious life.

The year was nearly over and during that year her mother had never once been to see her, or asked her to Sydney for even a day. She wrote to her now and then, but as in her letters she still kept up her favourite rôle of martyr, she was not specially anxious that her daughter should be a witness of her lazy luxurious life, or the comforts and attentions that Mr. Levison lavished upon her.

He often told her to ask Sheba over to the pretty villa of which she was ostensibly mistress, but Mrs. Ormatroyd assured him that the girl preferred her wild bush home, and her young companions to an old and careworn mother.

The contrast between her words and her fair, plump person,

somewhat tickled her employer, though he was not chary of the compliments expected.

The New South Wales capital of five and twenty years ago did not boast of very much society, nor had it been favoured by royal visits and society notables. Everything was dear, though money was plentiful and lavishly spent. Sydney did not boast of palatial buildings and fine streets, and the magnificent public gardens of to-day had chiefly nature to thank for their beauty; she had done so much that art seemed loth to intermeddle.

No situation could possess more exquisite charms than that lovely bay, opening out from between the two great natural headlands which shut it in from the ocean beyond, and spreading wide, and blue, and clear to the city itself. Tiny islands dot its surface; large vessels lie at anchor in perfect serenity; no unsightly mudbanks disfigure the magnificent harbour, and the red cliffs stand out in irregular masses, while around and beyond tower vast forests of pine and eucalyptus spreading upwards to that far-off Blue Range, which shuts in the land side of the capital.

One of the great charms of Port Jackson is that the land looks so beautiful from the bay, and the bay so beautiful from the land. The somewhat sad thought that the promising town has its foundations laid in a penal settlement, and half a century ago was peopled almost exclusively by criminals or rough diggers going to and fro to the goldfields, is lost sight of now, when the eye of the tourist, or the languid gaze of the curious visitor take in the surrounding beauty, developed and utilized by all the magic powers of wealth, taste and enterprise.

Mr. Levison was a great believer in the future of New South Wales. He had hopes of getting into Parliament in a few years time, and used to confide these aspirations to Mrs. Ormatroyd, who in her turn told him as much as she could remember about England and society—things only known to him by name, as his parents had brought him to the colonies when he was a mere boy, and things which he delighted to hear about from a credible source. It may be surmised, therefore, that Mrs. Ormatroyd's lines had fallen in pleasant places, and she herself was startled to find one morning that a year had passed since she came to Sydney; that the winter season heralded festivities and gaieties which she might now participate in with a clear conscience, and that a handsome cheque from Mr. Levison lay before her as a present for all her kindly care and attention to himself and his little daughter, and was tempting her to sally forth on a shopping expedition to George Street, in order to purchase some of those delicate grey and lavender fabrics which she had so long coveted, and with which her conscience assured her she might now really lighten her mourning.

CHAPTER XIX.

FICTION AND REALITY.

"MR. HILL," said Sheba, one morning when she had walked over to the Parsonage for her lessons, "I thought you only came to Australia for a year?"

The young man looked up from the volume of Pindar before him.

"Yes," he said, "that was the least possible time fixed; no less, but as much more as I liked. You see, Miss Sheba, your prophecy about my health has signally failed. I have benefited so much in every way by the change of climate, that I feel in no hurry to return to fogs and frosts and east winds."

"I am glad," she said simply; "I should feel very lonely without you."

"Without the lessons, I suppose you mean? You are a very enthusiastic pupil. I wish you could infuse some of your ardour into your brother."

"Doesn't he get on?" asked Sheba as she took her accustomed seat. "He ought to work hard. He will have to make his own way in the world. We must both work for mother. I can't bear to think of her slaving her life away for us! Oh, I do so long for the day when I can tell her she must rest, and I will work. Mr. Saxton told me the other day he knew a governess in Sydney who had £150 a year. She was at Government House. Fancy £150! wouldn't it be splendid?"

"But," said Noel Hill, "you are far too young to get such a salary at first, and you would have to teach modern languages. Now you know very well your French is far behind your Greek and Latin in proficiency, and German you won't learn at all!"

"It is so rough and ugly," pouted Sheba, "and French sounds so silly. I can't imagine a whole nation speaking it."

Noel Hill laughed outright. "They do, I assure you, and it is the most useful of all languages. You can travel anywhere and make yourself understood, if you know French."

"But I shall never be likely to travel. I expect I am a fixture here."

"You cannot tell," he said, "and it is always best to be prepared."

"Well," said Sheba with a deep sigh, "put the Greek books away and let us go on with the French dialogues. I wish they would write some sense. Let me see: 'of the weather,' 'of a promenade,' 'of a morning call,' 'of shopping.' Oh dear me, do people really talk such idiotic rubbish in France?"

"Come, come," said her master laughing, "you mustn't criticize: you must learn."

Sheba said no more. It was quite enough to be told that French was necessary to her scheme for independence in the future, to make her study it conscientiously. It was distasteful, and she disliked it, but all the same she sternly set herself to conquer its idioms, and to twist her tongue round its glib, accented phrases. She objected to an honest, straightforward English sentence being turned upside down to suit a Frenchman's mode of expression; but if that was his idea of saying "the weather cold?" or "the sister of his aunt had she a finer garden than the brother of his cousin?" well, she must needs submit—under protest.

When the three hours were over and the books put away she turned eagerly to Noel Hill.

"And how long," she asked, "do you really think you will stay here?"

"At least another year," he said; "and perhaps after that I may try for a curacy in Sydney."

"Another year," said Sheba thoughtfully; "I shall be sixteen. Quite old enough to work. Why," she added suddenly, as she looked at him with those large deep eyes, "I may be in Sydney too."

"That," he said, "would be very delightful. I confess to feeling curious as to how you will work out that future of independence on which you so fondly dwell."

"You may laugh," said Sheba, "as much as you please, but I am very determined; and as I look so much older than I am, there will be no difficulty in getting a situation."

"Please," said Noel Hill, "don't talk of it as a housemaid would. Call it an engagement."

She laughed. "Oh, what signifies a word?" she said. "I am not too particular and you have taught me to have no prejudices."

"*Tried* to teach you," he said; "I don't think I have succeeded."

"I am very troublesome, I know," the girl said gravely. "You know mother always called me 'a trial.' I feel so much in me and yet I can't do it. I make such good resolutions and yet—I am always forgetting them. Oh dear. . . . What an effort life is!"

"You have just described it," said Noel Hill gravely. "It is an effort; and an effort more or less severe according to our natures."

"Well," said Sheba, as she put on her hat and took up her books, "there's no use in worrying about what *may* be. I used to do it once; but I am getting wiser. I mean to take life just as it comes and not expect too much from it."

"You are too young for such philosophical doctrines," said Noel Hill. "Now I must really send you off. I have two pupils

coming, and they are due now. I thought Hex would have been here to walk back with you."

"It doesn't matter," said Sheba as she shook hands, "I like my own company now and then, and I don't get much of it at the Crow's Nest."

She walked slowly away, her books under her arm.

Very soon she came to the old house and stopped as she often did, and leant on the gate, to look sadly and regretfully at the deserted garden.

No one had yet taken it, and already the place had that desolate and neglected aspect which even a short period of unoccupation gives to a house.

The oleander trees were bare, the shrubs and bushes and fruit trees looked gaunt and leafless under the bright wintry sky. Sheba sighed as she looked at them and thought of the summer days that were dead and gone. What a long, long time ago it seemed since she had sat in that verandah, and read her books and written her sermons. What a long, long time since she had hidden herself in the "wilderness," and the boys had discovered her through the broken palings.

As she thought of it a mist rose before her eyes. It all looked so far away, though she was conscious that the change lay only in herself. She raised her hand to brush away the foolish tears, and as she did so some one near her touched her arm and said :

"It is you, Sheba ; I thought so."

The girl started and looked up. It was Ted Sanderson. "How you startled me !" she said. "What a long time it is since I have seen you. When did you come back ?"

"Two days ago," said the boy. "I can't say I liked the place or the life. However, my father says it is a good chance for me, and my uncle has one of the biggest stations in——"

"You have been there six months, haven't you ?" interrupted Sheba.

"Yes. I suppose you are wondering what has brought me back."

"Perhaps," said the girl with a faint smile, "you wanted to see —Bessie !"

He coloured. "Oh no," he said, "that's all over. She wouldn't have anything to say to me. I'm too young ; and you see I've no prospects. It's not likely a girl like herself would ever marry a squatter."

"Did you actually contemplate marrying her ?" asked Sheba. "She must have laughed."

"Yes, she did. But I've quite got over that. I'm not going to bother my head about girls any more."

"Well," said Sheba, "I think you are wise, unless you can confine your affections to one at a time. I wasn't jealous, but I might have been. You promised to be my sweetheart, you know, and the

moment you saw Bessie Saxton you went off after her. It wasn't fair, especially as she had no brother."

"Oh," he said laughing, "don't pretend you cared. I believe you were glad to get rid of me. You never answered one of my letters, and I brought the scent and hid it in that hollow tree in your wilderness, and you never even looked for it. I know that because I found it there one day, ever so long afterwards."

"And you took it out and gave it to Bessie."

"How on earth did you know that?"

"Oh," she said, laughing at his discomfited face, "I only guessed it; I didn't suppose you would waste anything so valuable. But come, I must be getting home or I shall be late. Where are you going?"

"I was thinking of going to the Crow's Nest," he said somewhat hesitatingly.

"Then come with me," said Sheba, "and you can tell me all about what life at a sheep-station is like. Did you come back by Sydney?"

"Yes, and—I wanted to tell you I saw your mother there. I met her in George Street."

"Ah, poor mother," said Sheba, "she has had a long trial. How she must suffer. . . . Tell me how she looked; was she worn and ill . . . and does she still have those dreadful headaches?"

"She looked remarkably well," said Ted. "She was just getting into a very swell carriage; she told me she had been shopping; she was beautifully dressed."

Sheba glanced down instinctively at her own shabby black gown. "Beautifully dressed," she said. "Wasn't she in mourning?"

"I don't know," said the boy, "if you call grey and white mourning. She looked about ten years younger than when she lived here, and it struck me altogether that she was very jolly and in very good spirits."

Sheba grew somewhat pale. This account did not tally at all with the martyr's letters and the incessant plea of poverty which she had heard for the last twelve months. Her brows darkened ominously; a sudden resolve flashed into her mind. She said nothing of it to her companion, but walked on beside him for some moments in silence.

When she next spoke it was of something totally different, and Ted Sanderson followed her lead without the least suspicion of any mischief to accrue from his chance words. They reached the Crow's Nest, and Sheba left him in charge of the delighted girls and went to her own room.

She took off her hat and cloak, and then stood leaning her arms on the dressing-table and surveying herself in an abstracted and quite unconscious fashion.

"What does it mean?" she thought. "Well—beautifully dressed—ten years younger! Oh, it can't be; what do boys know about dress? . . . Why, only in her last letter she speaks of her lonely, unhappy life . . . of how she misses us . . . how hard she has to work."

She paused abruptly and lifted her head.

"I will go and see for myself," she said resolutely. "I will tell no one. They shall not prepare her. I will leave early to-morrow before any one is up. . . . I can walk to the ferry; it is only four miles off . . . and I have just money enough to pay for crossing. Yes . . . I *will* do it. She has never even asked me to go and see her . . . never once come here. She cannot be surprised if I go just for a day."

The colour came back to her face. She smoothed her hair, and brushed the dust from her shabby gown, and then went back to the sitting-room to have her dinner.

But there was a change in her. She was the Sheba of old, sullen, disturbed, defiant; mind and temper were thrown out of gear, and Bessie's light foolish talk and Ted's incessant chatter seemed to irritate her beyond endurance.

Aunt Allison noticed the difference, but thought that something had gone wrong with her studies, or else that Ted's attentions to Bessie had annoyed her. She was far enough from suspecting the truth. The girl avoided her, and as soon as dinner was over went off to her own room with her books. Evening came, and instead of appearing at tea-time she sent word she had a bad headache and had gone to bed. Miss Saxton at once went to her and found her flushed and heavy-eyed, and evidently ill. But the girl would say nothing and only begged to be left alone, and Miss Saxton knew her peculiar disposition well enough to refrain from troubling her with questions. She made her drink some tea and then after a few gentle words of sympathy left her to herself.

All that night Sheba tossed and turned in sleepless misery. Towards daybreak she fell into a heavy slumber, but woke at six and started from her bed with a dull sense of trouble weighing on her mind and oppressing her memory. She was soon dressed, and leaving a pencilled note on the toilet table to explain her absence, she slipped out and through the garden and gained the road without any one seeing her.

The air was keen and cold and exhilarating. She walked swiftly along the rough uneven road which led in a straight line to the ferry. It was too early for the steamer, but a boatman offered to take her across for a shilling, and she gladly agreed to give it.

At any other time she would have been in ecstasies over the lovely scene; the deep blue water, the rocky islands; the towering cliffs of the Heads which shut in the harbour, the valleys clothed in primeval forests of pine, the white houses of the town

gleaming in the sparkling sunlight, the masts and spars of innumerable vessels in the inner bay and the far off Blue range of hills which bounded the horizon line.

But now though she noted them all it was in a dreamy absorbed way. She only wanted to get to her destination. The ferryman pulled slowly and mechanically and it was half-an-hour before she reached the opposite side.

As they touched the wharf she handed him his shilling, and springing on shore took her way up the steep rough street which she remembered led into the town.

(To be continued.)

TRAVELS IN LONDON

IN SEARCH OF THE PICTURESQUE.

By PERCY FITZGERALD, F.S.A.

PART V.

OLD CITY HALLS.

ONE of the pleasantest surprises in our City wanderings is when we stray down an unfrequented street with a *bizarre* name, and pass some antique but sound doorway, *porte-cochère* like, but with an air of solemn desertion which suggests a back street in an old-fashioned French town where there is a "Hotel," relic of former magnificence. It is thus we pause in Addle Street (odd name !) before a highly flamboyant and florid old gateway, carved in the bold and fussy abundance of fruit and cherubs which was fashionable two centuries ago. There is before us one such gloomy portal, an arch with a solid massive door of blackened oak. Within we can see the old courtyard, and a prospect of cheerful red or crimson brick with stone dressings. This fine solid bit of old fashion, which has a bold roof and oval windows above the regular formal doorway, is the old BREWERS' HALL. There is a modern flight of steps which leads up to the Hall itself, where the banquets are held. This is fine, spacious, well-lit, all set off with black carved oak and old portraits, with a grand elaborate pillared entrance of oak under the music gallery. Black oak is indeed profuse in all these places. It was astonishing, however, the air of forlorn desolation.

A courteous, superior official in charge showed us all there was to be shown with a hearty interest, as though rarely disturbed. The "Brewers" have not much *raison d'être*. The old Kitchen below had its interest—a vault-like place used once a month when the "Brewers" feast. This was interesting as retaining the old culinary apparatus, a venerable old table, and a curiously florid leaden cistern, with a seventeenth-century date and decorations, supported in a corner. In sooth an interesting old-world place, dating from 1673.

In a smaller and compact court in Monkwell Street we come upon "The Barber Surgeons." On the right as we enter, is a fine old portal with a capacious, elaborate, well-carved shell over the door,

filled in with the arms of the guild, very boldly wrought, and with abundance of flowers. These old pronounced and most florid doorways are very pleasant to see. But this is one of the places where the restorer has been at work, pulling down or shifting. The old Hall, which appears to have been a barren sort of place, has gone long since; but the scene of banqueting is a charming exquisitely-proportioned chamber of small size, Inigo Jones' work unmistakably, for it is lit in the centre by a beautiful elegant oval-shaped lantern, which is enriched in all its details, as indeed is all the ceiling, with fine carvings or stucco work. This lantern of stucco work is peculiarly Inigo's, and is seen at Ashburnham House and in other mansions of his work. On the walls is of course the famous Holbein—the Barbers receiving their charter from Henry VIII.—and some choice characteristic portraits by Lely and others. One admires, too, the Barbers' fine old oaken stairs, broad and of short flights. The Barbers, it seems, give pensions to certain working folk, beginning from about £6 a year, and they have some thirty-six on their list.

The little descending streets and lanes that lead down out of Cannon Street, with the turns and intersecting lanes, make up quite an antique quarter, so well stored are they with strange, gloomy old buildings and corners of an old-world character. Almost the first house we meet is the old mansion of the Skinners' Company, with its gate and archway and small court-yard. Here we are confronted with one of those elaborately magnificent old doorways, porch rather, all embroidered with massive and yet florid carvings, which make us wonder at the imagination and free hand of the worker. The door itself, apart from its carvings, is massive and architectural in its lines. These relics, it must be said, are always well taken care of, and wherever we go are found in good condition, enjoying a hale and lusty old age. Within there is the usual spacious and good hall, and broad oaken stair, with solid oak balusters and fine door cases, garlands and old mouldings; upstairs we are shown what is the pride of the place, the great "CEDAR ROOM," a fine long chamber entirely panelled in this precious wood, believed, though nothing is known, to have been a present from some Indian connection of the company. Much reasonable pride is taken in this unusual adornment; the air, too, is scented with fragrance. But here again the spoilers have been at their work. There is a fine architectural cornice running round, intended to give support to a flat ceiling, but it was thought that the effect would be heightened by raising the ceiling, and accordingly a "coved" one has taken the place of the old one, which is quite out of keeping and character. The whole, too, has been gaudily decorated; the cedar everywhere copiously overlaid with gilding, panels let into the coving and adorned with scutcheons, &c. Far better and more appropriate had been the old venerable panelling left unadorned.

One of the small steep darkened lanes that descend towards Thames Street off Queen Victoria Street, is Little Trinity Lane. Here we are attracted by a very remarkable doorway, richly carved and elaborate, yet strangely out of keeping with the poor mean house to which it is attached. This is the Painter Stainers' Hall, one of the most retired and least pretentious of the Halls, and yet, like many an unassuming person, recommended by extraordinary gifts. Entering a shabby room to the left, we find a widow-like woman waiting her turn, while some one else is pressing his claim at the desk. Indeed, the whole seems to have the air of a discounting office in a rather poor way of business. The Painter "Stayners" have a legacy of £80,000 to administer, the interest of which supports some two hundred pensioners. Going up a rather rickety stair, we are introduced to the old Hall itself, a genuine thing enough, with the suitable dinginess and subdued shabbiness. It has unhappily been spoilt by thrusting an adjoining room into it, the wall being supported by pillars and arches. A quaint feature, too, is the door through which we have entered, a little low arch supported by pillars, over which projects a small balcony, where, as I was informed, the ladies sit. The panelled walls are closely covered with pictures, which are made to suit the panels, and thus seem to belong to the walls. There is a darkened monastic air over the whole, and a curious, old-world, sequestered look. Here are held the little dinners of the society, "the Worshipful Company of Painters, otherwise Painter Stainers," as they are careful to describe themselves, though if not careful, one is apt to slip into the phrase "paper stainers." The modest Hall was formerly more attractive than it is now, and the glories of its ceiling has long ago disappeared. This little corporation is highly interesting, as previous to the founding of the Royal Academy, it was this body that represented the interest of English painters.

Decorative painting, such as was largely employed in ornamenting carriages, ceilings and barges, seems to come under their supervision, and the society was occasionally invited to give a certificate as to whether such work was fitly executed. They gave an entertainment on St. Luke's Day, and we find that on May 17th, 1635, "Mr. Inigo Jones, the King's surveyor, was invited to dinner, and very willingly came and dined with the company." Some of the invitations have the signature of Verrio and Sir Godfrey Kneller. The ancient pictures on the wall are mostly gifts from the painters, who were living men of the company. One of the minutes in the books has justly furnished considerable entertainment from its quaint simplicity: "On the 10th March, 1673," is pronounced this censure: "That the painter of Joseph and Pottifer's Wife and the Fowre Elements be fined £3 6s. 8d. for such bad work."

OLD HOUSES IN AND ABOUT LONDON.

It is always pleasant to see some old well-preserved mansion with its pictures and doorways in good condition, the attendant house-keeper directing attention in her prim "show-woman" way to the carvings by "*Grumbling Gibbons*" (a phrase once actually uttered). More grateful, however, is it to come by chance on some neglected unsung mansion which is celebrated by no flourishings of house-keeper, and which lingers on in its modest seclusion. Such used to be the Hoghton Tower in Lancashire, with its lone forsaken court and leaden statue in the centre, its terraces and balustrades, all sad and dilapidated.

There are still to be found in and about London a few of the old and picturesque family mansions built in the days of King William or Queen Anne. These veterans of ripe, time-defying brick, spacious and even elegant in their proportions, excite more interest than most of us are able to explain. Some of the best of these old houses have been levelled. A few still exist—usually altered and added to for the use of schools or "institutions," but not many of them are likely to last much longer.

Only the other day we heard that a fine old house at Wandsworth had been doomed: it was to be cleared away by some builder of suburban villas. And a very interesting specimen of its kind it was. It stands back a little from the road—presenting a rather imposing front of ripe and hard old red brick, with a richly carved tympanum curiously protected from the incursions of the birds by a wire netting—a building well disposed and balanced, with two little low wings or dependencies peeping from behind luxuriant shrubs. Over all was that sort of red rust which gives a grateful look of ripeness to old brickwork. The doorway is well and richly carved. Welcome on entering was the prospect of the old hall, dusky, panelled in oak, and crossed by three airy arches, carved, with light pillars suggesting a colonnade. Beyond is the stair, rising effectively in short lengths. The elegant twisted rail, slight but stable, the solidly moulded balustrade—all is effective. The wall of the stair is richly dight with allegorical painting; whilst in the carved ceiling, among the clouds and vapours, are stately medallions with portraits. The colours, though somewhat faded and overlaid with grime, are in good order, and when cleaned would make a brave show no doubt—Verrio's work, a country job you may easily believe it to be. All about the mansion is abundant panelling and doors with cornices richly cut. There is a perplexing little room, seemingly sliced off some greater apartment, the ceiling of which also displays pictorial glories—two tremendous dames seated on clouds, one handing a sealed letter to the other. In the broad ceiling over the stair is a medallion picture said to be a portrait of the Duchess of York; and another

believed to represent Queen Anne. This was called the Manor House.

In all this there was a sense of surprise mingled with a tranquil charm, a kind of new sensation. It was pleasant to think that the hard and grinding London practical spirit had overlooked this graceful relic. The spirit of Anne seemed to flutter through the old chambers. But it was on passing through to the back, to the old-fashioned "grounds," that this sentiment was intensified. Looking up we see that its back façade is as architectural as the front, displaying another richly-carved pediment and scutcheon with what appears to be a cypher. The solemn brickwork looks down on an old-fashioned low-lying plaisance.

From the richly-carved doorway we enter upon a stone platform; two gracefully curved flights of steps sweeping down to the garden. Here you can scarcely believe that you are close to the high-road and to the ever-jingling tramcars. Beyond, there are shady old trees and velvet lawns, strongly marked by an old-fashioned air of tranquillity.

This old place is said to have been the residence of the Princess Anne and her husband. For my part, I have no hesitation in accepting the tradition. In any case, let us hope that the spoiler will not be allowed to intrude. There are but few of these houses in or near London, and none so interesting as this.

But there is yet another old house, more interesting than any, not merely from its merits as a picturesque structure as from its associations. Half-way up Highgate Hill, which leads us to a cluster of old houses and on to Hampstead, where there are many more, we come to this solid, impregnable-looking building, rising in its garden and standing retired behind a low wall and surrounded by old trees. This is Cromwell House, which there is a tradition was inhabited by him, or by one of his generals, Ireton, most probably. This fine old building impresses us by its massive and picturesque air, its high roof and "shaggy" eaves, its heavy solid cupola and its rich and beautiful carvings. The very wooden gates of the period have remained with their delicate carvings in low relief. The tone and colouring of the brickwork is of a mellow genial crimson, almost raspberry tinted, the mouldings are all delicate yet bold and firm, a model for modern artists in brick; they are sharp as on the day they were wrought and will stand time and weather for a century to come. The doorway is heavy and massive. The whole aspect of this fine old mansion suggests that we are a hundred miles away from London. When we enter, we find nothing but deep brown oak, heavily corniced doors, a hall all set off with the same material, sombre and mysterious. Beyond is the stair, which has a celebrity of its own; it is laid out in an always effective style of short flights of half-a-dozen steps, with then a turn at right angles, and a landing, as though our fathers like Hamlet were "short and scant of breath," and

liked to ascend leisurely. There are fine massive balustrades and—here is the curiosity of the thing—at intervals rise carved oak statuettes of the Parliamentary soldiers with singular and pleasing effect. It is astonishing that these *bizarre* ornaments have escaped destruction hitherto, and that accident or design has not damaged or destroyed them. The old house is now a children's hospital, and nurses and matrons pass up and down the Parliamentary staircase. But this occupancy suggests misgivings, as a hospital, once it begins to flourish, has a fashion of expanding or levelling regardless of antiquarian associations. This choice piece of ground, the gardens behind and the fine healthy, stimulating air are tempting enough; and a few years may see the Cromwellian house levelled, and an imposing modern, but hideous pile reared in its place.

A pilgrimage in search of the old London houses and mansions would discover much more that is interesting and novel. London abounds in such. But here the same old story of disaster has to be repeated—the best are gone or going. Not by the slow processes of the leveller and builder, but by violent cataclasms which work wholesale.

There has been an enemy working underground during the past years—an ogre more wholesale and omnivorous than has yet appeared. This arose out of the burrowing of the underground lines in the City—the grand teredo, that steadily bored its way to the Mansion House Station from the Tower. It will hardly be credited “that there has been no such general demolition since the days of the Great Fire. *No less than 130 houses, some of them the oldest in London, and two of the City halls, have been pulled down in order to construct the new thoroughfare which continues Gracechurch street to Tower Hill.* The general destruction was added to by the tunnelling of the link line from the Tower to the Mansion House. All Cannon Street east of Dowgate Hill is undermined.

Even the fire seems to pick out what has escaped the demolisher and “housebreakers,” as in the case of the fine old Sunderland mansion in Gerrard Street, Soho, burnt and gutted the other day. It is pleasant ever to pass by one of these stately façades, which proclaim their old dignity with their bold moulding and cornice, solidly enriched windows and handsome doorway, often meanly fashioned into two when the house itself was divided. It is in Soho that we are most struck with these relics. A walk down Dean Street, made slowly, will discover a number of these fine old houses, on the side of the Royalty Theatre. We pass house after house, each of an imposing pattern. Every doorway is carved, and offers every variety of stately pillars and enriched devices. Each seems to be the work of an artist that knew his business. Even in the smaller patterns there is an air of effect and dignity, with which our modern artificers, in their most

pretentious "West End" erections, cannot compass. The rest of the house corresponds, fine old smooth brickwork, wood cornice and mouldings, halls panelled, ceilings stuccoed. Such are the attractions of which our town is incurious. Gerrard Street, before alluded to, has some fine doorways, and indeed in the last century was quite a fashionable quarter. A good many years ago it was announced that a fine old mansion in Leadenhall Street was about to be demolished—a merchant's house of the olden time—and large crowds visited it. It was a most interesting spectacle, as showing in what magnificent comfort the old merchant of King William's days lived, among his clerks and wares and business generally. The walls were painted in fresco, the rooms airy, the staircase spacious and noble. One might well lament the loss of this fine specimen, but it had a court-yard and covered much ground of extraordinary value, so the "housebreakers" came, and it passed away. Not long ago, however, the public was again invited to take farewell of another merchant's mansion, declared positively to be the last surviving specimen of the kind. Vast crowds came accordingly and visited every portion of this interesting old house, which however was not so imposing or effective as this old destroyed house in Leadenhall Street. I went with the rest. It was situated in the interesting Austin Friars, where you enter from the street under an arch and find yourself in the grounds and inclosure of the old Augustines' monastery, now covered with houses, but still laid out in curious winding passages, and not unpicturesque. On our right is the old Dutch Church. With difficulty we find the old house, which is like a manor house—No. 21—having its steps and garden—waste enough. It could be traced on maps, and had a regular pedigree, from its first possessor, Olmuis, a Dutch merchant, in King William's time, from whom it passed to the French family of Tierrenoult, from them to the Minets—eminent bankers in the days of the First French Empire—and from them to Thomas Le Marchant, whose descendant held it as representative of the firm of Thomas, Son, and Lefevre. From these last holders the late owner, Mr. John Fleming, acquired the property, and, being an antiquarian, kept it intact. It is described "as a large red brick structure, lined throughout with quaintly carved panels and wainscoting, and its many rooms are capacious, lofty, and comfortable." Entering the old hall through a fine doorway, the merchant's counting-house is seen to the right, and his morning room and many remains of ware rooms to the left. Below this are capacious cellars, containing mysterious hiding places, and a remarkable vaulted strong room with an iron door. Here, too, is an old stone well, the water of which was used by the present owner until he discovered that there were some human bones at the bottom of it. In the vaulted kitchen there is a veritable old Dutch oven, faced with fantastic blue tiles, representing courtiers caracoling on fat

Flanders mares, and the figures alternate with illustrations of tulips and tiger-lilies. Outside are the old red-tiled stables, and brew-house with gabled roof; and these look on part of the Garden of the Mendicants, still containing a gnarled old fig-tree that has at spasmodic intervals borne fruit, but ends its life next week. Returning to the hall we mount a broad staircase with large twisted balustrades and rails, every step of which is ornamented with intricate floral decoration. The panelling was of a rather meagre kind, with small mouldings up a narrow stair, and getting on to the red-tiled roof, with a stone parapet surrounding it, we can see what may be called the scheme of this extraordinary old property. The house is surrounded by other old buildings—all alike sentenced to destruction next Monday morning—and scraps of gardens, and over the way we see the huge modern buildings that now stand on the site of the Drapers' Gardens, which existed in many a living person's memory. The Priory was built over the remains of an old Roman road eighteen feet below the present level of Drapers' Gardens, and the Lords of the days of Henry VIII. demolished the Priory the Dutch merchants bought from the Lords, and the French bankers from them—so now a road for the convenience of the public is to be made right through this very last relic of what old London mercantile houses were, and while antiquaries may deplore, the modern architect and builder will rejoice." There was something pathetic in the forlorn look of the whole, particularly of this abandoned bit of City garden, with its broad flight of riveted Purbeck flag steps and old iron hand-rails approaching it. Lofty, comfortable, highly respectable, and in its true sense "snug" is the dining-room on the first floor, with its many ingeniously contrived cupboards and good woodwork. The outside displayed the sad coloured tint of old and grimed brick. Coming by a day or two later, I found the hoardings already up, and the "breakers" at their work.

The old mansions of nobles and gentlemen in Grosvenor Street, Brook Street, Hill Street, Burlington Street and Portman Square, are generally of a fine and dignified pattern. There is an imposing air in the hall, and the staircase is laid out in a noble style. The reception rooms are grand and disposed in an original way, a surprise to us who are accustomed to the regular pattern of "front and back drawing-rooms." Some of these old mansions are pleasing to study and excite admiration for their good effect. The Burlington Hotel has lately added to its premises a couple of old and stately mansions of this grand pattern. The decoration is the most interesting feature, consisting of garlands and panels, wrought in a sort of massive stucco and laid profusely on the walls, with a rich but heavy effect—surfaces, as they are called, of the boldest pattern; medallions and flowers are everywhere.

Close by is a more interesting pile which for years many have passed by without even a look of curiosity. This is a large build-

ing at the bottom of Old Burlington Street, apparently a factory or warehouse. "Few persons living," says an agreeable reminiscient, writing in February, 1887, "can recollect the old Western Exchange, which in 1820 was one of the sights of London. It ran parallel with the Burlington Arcade, the entrance being from 10, Old Bond Street, to which house it is still attached, and was at one time the grand banqueting hall. This hall is 170 feet by 105 feet, is very lofty, and has spacious galleries all round, supported by handsome Doric columns, highly decorated. There are numerous ante-rooms covering a large space of ground at the rear of several houses in Old Bond Street, the whole abutting on the Burlington Arcade, to which at one time there was an entrance. Its existence dates back to about the end of the sixteenth century, when the northern part of the street ended here. New Bond Street was then an open field known as Conduit Mead, named from one of the Conduits which supplied this part of London with water. Pope speaks of this house as the country mansion of an eccentric nobleman and courtier of the reign of James II., who was celebrated for his passion for dancing. At the age of 75, after the death of George, Prince of Denmark, he is said to have demanded an audience of Queen Anne to persuade her Majesty to dispel her grief 'by applying to this exercise.' He was afterwards forbidden the royal presence. Byron, Sir Walter Scott and Tom Moore frequently met here. In 1820 this place was converted into a bazaar, known, as already stated, as the Western Exchange. Though a fashionable resort before dinner of the idle and well-to-do, it did not last many years. Since then it has had a chequered existence, being occupied by commercial firms for various purposes. It is now about to be demolished to erect on its site 'commanding premises' for a West-end firm of coach-builders, and thus one more of the few old London houses with a history will soon have disappeared for ever."

One is glad to find there are always plenty of these simple, earnest folk whose heart seems to be in these old relics, and who watch their destruction with a sort of grief. In the same spirit another in 1882 took note of the devastation going on at Hampstead. "I think it may interest some of your readers to know that two somewhat antiquated buildings are now in course of demolition in Hampstead. I refer to Queen Elizabeth's Chicken House, Rosslyn Street, and the old Pump Room, in Well Walk. The former has the reputation of having been honoured by the frequent visits of James I., when on his hunting expeditions in the neighbouring forest, and not very long ago had a painted window in one of its rooms on which was an inscription in French to the effect that 'In this chamber slept James, first King of that name.' The house has for many years been let out in small tenements, and at last being considered unsafe is being pulled down. The old Pump Room, situated in a lovely avenue, lately threatened

with destruction, in a quiet nook of Hampstead, and nearly opposite the seat where poor John Keats used to sit and breathe out his wasted life in 'poetic ecstasy, belongs to the 'Wells charity' trustees, and has been condemned to make room for modern villas and imitation Queen Anne houses. First used as a pump-room for the convenience of the quality and fashion of the early part of the last century, which came in crowds to Hampstead to drink the then popular medicinal waters, and to flirt, intrigue, and gamble at this fashionable resort, it afterwards became an Episcopalian chapel, then a Presbyterian meeting-house, and latterly a drill-hall for the local volunteer corps; and now, having fulfilled its destiny by serving the purposes of fashion and folly nearly two centuries ago, and since of religion and patriotism, it is following the footsteps of its old neighbour and contemporary, the ancient Assembly Room, which quietly passed away a few years back."

In Hanover Square and George Street there is the same Dutch tone, as any one will see who pauses for a few minutes and looks from one house to another. Removing the shops, in imagination, as well as the plaster with which the old brickwork has been encrusted, and peopling them with fine company, carriages waiting at the door, we shall see what the old pattern was. Many are rich in pilasters and cornices, and it will be noted that most of the windows are generally arched. They are, in fact, of the same pattern as some of the stately mansions in Grosvenor Square inhabited by the "nobility and gentry," and would have the same effect if occupied by such tenants. A curious and elaborately adorned house stands on the right of the church—the fashionable St. George's.

To an artistic eye one of the pleasantest sights is an old-fashioned mansion standing in its garden, with an elegant gate of twisted iron, monograms, and a gilt helmet, it may be, interlaced, with sinuous leaves gracefully bent. Through its openings we see the straight flagged walk leading to the fan-shaped steps, with the smooth flowing rail of hammered iron, opening out in a graceful curve. The doorway is tall and narrow, with an overhanging cornice. The windows are pierced with a feeling of design and balance. There is the high, the solid, imperishable carved eaves which no damp can penetrate. The whole has an air of grace; it suits its garden and its garden suits it. Out at Clapton, nearly opposite to the Salvationist Barracks, is a house of this pattern; pleasing, if only as a survival of the well-designed suburban house, and which will well repay the walk. It is now a ladies' school.

Turning out of High Street, Kensington, close by the station, and descending "Wright's Lane" for a hundred yards or so, we find ourselves before another of these surviving old mansions—SCARSDALE HOUSE. There is the venerable brick wall running

along the road and inclosing a garden as old, while the mansion, with its tiled roof, turns its shoulder to the road and looks towards its fair garden. There is a gateway, with piers surmounted by well-carved vases of graceful pattern. Entering we find ourselves in a spacious garden of the old Manor House pattern—a broad walk, with piers half-way down—remains, probably, of a terrace, and at the bottom a sort of ruined pavilion or summer-house; steps lead down from the old doorway into the garden, and the house, with its tiled roof and dormer windows, forms a pleasing background. There is an air of repose and abandonment over all, and no one would suppose he was in the heart of a busy quarter of the city.

Within we find all in keeping. The spacious reception and drawing-rooms are long and lofty, and “walled” with old panelling, heavily moulded, and which have not been disfigured with paint or even varnish. The staircase is in short flights, with broad landings, and has fine substantial balusters of oak, with richly-twisted rails. The doorways are black as ebony, and carved elaborately; and an entrance to one of the bedrooms is deeply embayed, and offers an effective union of arched and square doorway combined, supported on carved pillars. There is an abundance of recesses and shadowy places, and the whole has quite a picturesque air. Long may Scarsdale House be spared! though Railway Companies and speculative builders have the valuable ground in their eyes, and would be glad—the latter, at least—to erect a showy Scarsdale Terrace, or Mansions, “suitable for noblemen, gentlemen, Members of Parliament, or bachelors of position.”

Another interesting house is to be found in a mean street, just out of Leicester Square, next Orange Street Chapel, where a great philosopher lived from 1710 to 1827. It is a poor, whitened, tumbling-down place, and will not hold together long. It is a melancholy spectacle. Some thirty years ago it was a sort of restaurant, dignified by the name of “Hotel Newton.” Persons before that date recalled the aspect of the house, which appropriately displayed the actual observatory on the top, used regularly, it was said, by the philosopher at the beginning of the century. A Frenchman who occupied the house, and who carried on the calling of an optician, had many of the philosopher’s instruments, which he offered for sale to the curious in such matters. After he passed away, the observatory was removed, amid much lament over such a heathen sacrifice. It came out, however, that the whole was an imposture; the observatory had been constructed by the Frenchman himself, and the sale of the instruments was akin to the sale of the bits of bronze from the adjoining statue of Charles I.

Flaxman’s house is close to that interesting square—so suggestive of Bath—Fitzroy Square. Canning’s house is in Conduit

Street, but has been fashioned into a shop. The name, however, does not excite much interest, as we are too near his time; though this objection would not hold in the case of Lord Beaconsfield, whose house in Curzon Street, Mayfair, might be acceptably distinguished by a tablet.

With all the encroachments of the clamorous, bustling Fleet Street, a devouring commercial sense might long since have seized upon the fair spacious gardens which lie within the inclosure of the Temple. Over and over again this charming and unusual contrast has been noted between the almost monastic retirement that reigns behind the screen of houses, and the torrent of busy life that pours ceaselessly through Fleet Street.

Lincoln's Inn, as is well known to antiquaries, was laid out by Inigo Jones, and it is said by a quaint conceit he intended the open square itself to represent exactly the dimensions of the base of the pyramids. Any one passing this way may amuse himself by re-erecting in his imagination the great Egyptian monument on this foundation. We find this famous architect's work displayed along one whole side of the square, the one that starts from the corner of Queen Street. Few things in London so much exhibits the evidence of fallen state and decayed grandeur. The scale of the mansions and their decoration show that they were intended for persons of the first rank. They are in Inigo's favourite manner when designing residences—a façade set off with a cornice and pilasters. Here can be seen abundant devices—roses and *fleurs de lis*. Few may have noted the two massive gate piers of great height, surmounted by huge carved vases or bosses, which stand forward in their uselessness in front of a large paved space. A little examination will show that this was the great courtyard in front of a most imposing architectural mansion, now divided into two houses. This was old Ancaster House, once the palace of the Lindseys, and, curious to say, there is another imposing mansion belonging to the same family still to be seen at Chelsea. At the corner next Queen Street is a fine old Georgian red-brick house of great pretensions, with a courtyard in front of a spacious double flight of steps. This is an excellent specimen of the nobleman's mansion in the olden time. It belonged to the notorious, jobbing old Duke of Newcastle, and was the scene of many of his intrigues. The rooms are spacious and imposing, and there is a fine staircase.

The grouped buildings adjoining, forming Lincoln's Inn, are full of charm and interest. Now that the curiosity "shanties" have been cleared away, the hall with its effective lantern, the Inigo Jones chapel, and the old brick-lined courtyard have a very pleasing irregularity. The fine modern hall and library, Mr. Hardwicke's work, have been deservedly praised—is it too bold a thing to add, because it is the last specimen of pure, well-proportioned, good architecture that we have, though, indeed, the proportions of the

mass have been spoiled by making an addition. It may be added here that another work of the same architect, the Consumption Hospital at Brompton, offers the same charm of repose and harmony. We feel as we look that it is perfectly satisfactory, with its mellow tones, "subdued" stone dressing, and admirable proportions. Of the brick wall that runs along the Lincoln's Inn Buildings, it is said some of the bricks were laid by Inigo himself. On the side that faces Ancaster House there is a little old garden within a wall overlooked by a grim mansion. The old Lincoln's Inn gateway, caked and crusted into a grim mass, is one of the most venerable monuments in London; yet it is believed has had a narrow escape from destruction—the enterprising builder having levelled all the houses down to it.

OLD HOUSES IN THE SUBURBS.

As we trudge along the high road by Chiswick we approach what should have extraordinary interest for the artistic mind. A high wall runs along the path. Within it is to be seen a much dilapidated old house, its shoulder turned to the road, and which, like many a dilapidated old person, has the air of having seen better days. Its squalor is so marked, its windows shattered and patched like an Irish shanty, that we wonder at finding such a spectacle on a country road. There are children as squalid, and a general air of discomfort. This is Hogarth's old home. "Hogarth's Home" it is called, which he purchased about 1750, when he had grown prosperous, and whence he used to drive into town in his carriage. The good old red brick seems sound enough, and I fancy it would not be difficult to restore and repair. It is wonderful that some artist or litterateur does not purchase it, as it could be secured no doubt for a song; and there would be additional gratification of earning some public gratitude. One "fine morning" it will be found that it has been swept away, and a row of "Hogarth Villas" erected in its stead.

Beside the river runs a wall which incloses the grounds and gardens of Chiswick House, the Duke of Devonshire's villa, a classical structure, built by that nobleman of elegant taste—Lord Burlington, whose work is to be seen, not only in London, but at York and other places. His buildings all exhibit this character, and are effective. This Italian villa with the cupola to its octagon room rising over the pillared pediment is in his best style. Not far away on the roadside is another villa, with an ambitious portico and pillars which may have been designed by the same amateur. It would be a surprise now-a-days to find a nobleman designing houses.

Kew, hackneyed and "cocknified" as it is, offers charms of its own that do not stale by custom: as we approach it by the river

bank it seems to breathe a tone of soft and even melancholy tranquillity. The beautifully designed snowy bridge, with its gracefully curved gentle ascent and descent seems to suit the umbrageous bank on the Richmond side. It should be noted that few rivers have been so fortunate in their bridges as the silvery Thames. They are almost graceful, and harmonize themselves to the banks, particularly those of Richmond, Henley and Kew, and many more. There is a little Mall at Kew, as there is at Mortlake, formed of stunted, narrow and old-fashioned houses. The Common at Kew, notwithstanding the tea-houses and tea-gardens and the touting notices at the gates, has a truly rococo air which it is not likely to lose. The cheerful white posts, the church perched down in the middle, the old houses round, the grim forlorn palace and the cheerful trams, all add to the effect. There is a fine and imposing old house on the right as you face the gardens, which was no doubt one of those occupied by the young Princes during the unhappy residence of George III. Opposite is the heavy porch and ancient dependencies of the old palace. The air is thick with the memories of the terrible days when the king was seized with madness, and the London road was alive with the carriages of ministers and physicians, constantly posting down.

Of Richmond, too, it is hard to tire, and it happily still retains its air of old fashion. The town itself, in spite of many changes and new shops, keeps its old drowsy and quaint air. Only a few years ago there stood close by the railway a terrace of Queen Anne houses, of the brightest, cheerfullest red, and whose white doorways were miracles of elaborate carvings. They are gone now. As you walk up the street, it is always pleasant to think of the little bye lanes and twisting alleys that can lead you on at any moment to the spacious Richmond Green, which, as it were, accompanies the town on its way. I like to see Billett's confection shop, where the only true and genuine "maid of honour" cakes are to be had—excellent special dainties in their way. Billett's shop in those early times seemed an awe-inspiring place, and a palace of dainties. There is a quaint, old-fashioned "cut" about the shop itself. Excellent and toothsome also are the "maids of honour." There is pleasant quaintness in this recent protest of the proprietor and his honest sensitiveness about his dainty:

"SIR,—The writer of your admirable article on 'Richmond Park and Town' observes that 'The pastrycook's shop seems to have wandered a little away from its old locality, and it may be that its genealogy is doubtful.' I would simply say that the business has been in the hands of the present family for over fifty years, and that the 'maids of honour' have been sold at this same shop for nearly 200 years. The house itself is about 300 years

old. In conclusion I may add that the pastry has, I hope, lost nothing of its traditional flavour since the days when it is on record that £1,000 was paid for the secret of how to prepare them. The same sum of money has since been paid for the recipe.

“Yours truly,
“Richmond, June 8.

J. T. BILLETT, JUN.,
the Proprietor.”

To celebrate the recent Jubilee, Billett gave away an extra “maid of honour” for every dozen purchased.

Years ago, in boyhood’s happy hours, Richmond seemed a very imposing place to live in. There was a regular society of great and small personages. There were lady patronesses, and people came all the way from town for “our annual Richmond ball,” always given at the Castle hotel, that seemed then, with its fine river terrace and gardens and ball room, a most stately and awe-striking hostelry. Now it seems a poorish place enough; it has lain unlet and abandoned for the last twenty years. What music and fiddling and dancing in there—barges coming down in the season laden with cheerful company!

The Green too, with its delightfully named Maid of Honour Row, still shows a Queen Anne Terrace of the gayest style, with twisted iron gates and large bay windows, such as the Maids would have relished, and gardens in front. A few years back was levelled the oldest theatre in the kingdom, and here the old King George had often sat and enjoyed the play, having come over from Kew. We look with pleased wonder at the old archway and tower, sole remaining fragments of the old Sheen Palace; it is so sound and quaint, and, being inhabited, has an air of vitality. The snug, rambling old house and garden adjoining has an air of decayed courtliness: indeed, the whole of this rambling corner, with the winding lane that leads to the river bank, is original and interesting to a degree.

In the heart of the town, just as we turn down to the bridge, where there is one of the most beautiful and exhilarating views of the river, looking up and down, we come to a remarkable old house, one of the finest specimens of Georgian brickwork in the country. This imperishable looking, rubicund structure is known as the Trumpeter House, from two curious figures placed in front. It is in a sequestered corner of its own, and might be built for ever, so firm is it, defying time and damp. Behind is its old fashioned sward, with curious old trees, Cedar of Lebanon, trimmed hedges, and sunk fences stretching down to the river walk, to which, too, it displays an imposing, snowy portico and pillars on a back-ground of cheerful red.

Old Richmond is full of suggestions and old associations. There is a tablet to the memory affixed to the old church; also

Mrs. Pritchard's house, Sir Joshua's, Thomson's the poet, and many more.

Greenwich is familiar enough, "the Ship" or whitebait portion at least. But as you leave the town behind and ascend the steep Grooms Hill outskirts, we come upon many a pretty bit, and plenty of sound old houses. Halfway up, there is a curious garden pavilion of true Jacobean design, such as is found in old English gardens, like those of Stonyhurst. It is an elegant design with open arches at the side, and well-proportioned pediment. Within, the ceiling is richly stuccoed round a circular panel, intended to hold a painting, but now the whole is decayed and gone to ruin. On a summer's evening the owners of the garden could sit here and overlook the road as well as the gambols in Greenwich Park. There is a legible date on it, of 1685. It must have been connected with some stately mansion, on whose plaisance it was situated, but now swept away.

A little higher up, and next the pretty Catholic chapel, is a genuine old mansion, next the road, older than the usual Queen Anne ones. It is a pity that such are not carefully restored by some wealthy citizen, for they would be effective. On the other side of the chapel is a fine specimen of old red brick, shining as a pippin, and even sounder than on the day it was built.

Higher up on the hill, and peeping over a high inclosure, is a fine steeped-roofed old house in its garden, its face turned to the park, its back, which we confront, overgrown. This mixture of green and red with the more delicate tint of the shingle roof makes a cheerful combination. These old houses are perched down in a delightful irregular fashion here and there on the side of the hill, each with its trees and inclosure, making a settlement for itself. There are many—and most have a history of some sort—notable persons having resided in them. At the top, facing the open country, the Blackheath valley lying below, we come to the Ranger's house of rubicund brick and pleasing design, but disfigured by a covered passage to the gate. This was the late Duke of Albany's residence, and long before his time was the mansion of the stout, coarse and neglected Princess Caroline of Wales, about the time of "the Book" and other disgraces. As I often stand before it, and knowing her history well, the images of the high jinks that used to reign here rise before me, the Opposition ministers, Percivals, Gilbert Elliotts, &c., travelling down to dine, to have what were very like games of romps in these gardens behind. In the same line of road is a fine old crusted mansion of some pretension, with solemn antique grounds behind, and a compact, snug, and reverent air.

There is surely no air so keen, bracing and reviving as that which sweeps with such vigour across the fine open common of

Blackheath; it has always this Bath-like and refreshing properties. The houses that fringe the common have a quaint air of old fashion, somewhat sad coloured and of that dull "gamboge" tint which Elia spoke of, but they have a good snug air. Such belong to "Montpelier Terrace," and here is "The Paragon," which must have been considered a great effort in its day. The Paragon is a semi-circular row of "desirable" mansions, built with some state and pretension—the pattern for a "Paragon" being usually two semi-detached houses joined by a low colonnade. In front there are grounds. There are Paragons in most of the suburbs—at Streatham; and one close to London, in the Old Kent Road, a dispiriting and decayed place.

Close by the Paragon, and on the gentle descent that leads down into the little town of Blackheath, is a clump of umbrageous planting, with a little iron gate opening into pretty and well-sheltered grounds. Entering, for it is open to all, a walk leads up to what is something of a surprise. Here is a fine solid building of the Wren pattern, high roofed, deep gabled and red bricked. Its many windows are set off with deep green "jalousies," and in the middle there is a façade with two statues of the founder and foundress, standing side by side in their old-fashioned dress; below is some carved flourishings and graceful garlands of stone flowers, with a deep and spreading archway, through which we see the interior of a retired square. This is Morden College, a retreat that the world knows little of, and founded for reduced and comparatively genteel persons. The archway is lined with oak panelling and long oaken benches, acceptable in the summer, where the collegians mostly sit and gossip, and perhaps smoke. Within the square the pretty colonnade runs all round, and must be convenient for pleasant walking in wet weather. There is the old sun-dial looking down, and a quaint clock-tower with a bell, lantern and weather-cock. Altogether a drowsy, picturesque old place, dating from 1675. Sometime before visiting this pleasing mansion I had made a visit to another menaced mansion, a mile or so further on. Coming to the High Street of Putney, one may pause to lament the loss to old-fashioned picturesque that has been suffered within a few years. The fine new stone bridge is a great and much desired convenience, but the sentimentalist will lament its crazy wooden predecessor, rising so steeply and propped on angular wooden cages, that were patched and repaired over and over again. This was dear to artists and etchers. The best portion was the gloomy old "Toll House," with its antique roof of a Nuremberg pattern, grimed and shadowy. This was so suggestive of mystery and romance, that in the days of realistic dramas, like the "Streets of London," it was taken into a "sensation" piece. On the hoardings was a huge coloured picture,

representing the structure by moonlight, with some such heading as:—

THE MURDER—THE OLD TOLL HOUSE, PUTNEY!!

The Old Toll House still lingers on ingloriously and purposeless—or did linger.

(To be continued.)

A WRONG TURNING.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MOLLY BAWN," "PHYLLIS," ETC., ETC

"DEAR fellow! so glad to see you! But what a godless hour to arrive at. After twelve! You must be frozen," cries Oswald Travers all in one breath, as he rushes down the stone steps to welcome his cousin. "Here, Higgins," to the butler, "see to Captain Dugdale's luggage. By Jove! what a night."

"Couldn't come a second sooner," says Dugdale, springing from the dog-cart and shaking the snow from his shoulders. "Thought up to the last I shouldn't be able to come at all. As it is I've run it rather fine, eh? This is the 23rd and——"

"The 24th, my good friend; Christmas Eve already. Here, come along, you must be positively famished."

"Well, I *could* eat something," says Dugdale laughing, and following him into the grand old hall, still ablaze with lights, and with two roaring fires in it that seem determined to defy the wintry cold without.

"Sir George and the *mater*, and all the respectable members of the household, are in bed," says Oswald, the eldest son of the name. "The more frivolous ones are still in the billiard room. But we can give them a wide berth for this night, at all events, as I expect you are tired; and, besides, I want a word or two with you alone. My father had quite given you up—you are so late. Come along, and let me show you your room whilst they are preparing some supper for you. Higgins, which is Captain Dugdale's room?"

"Blue chamber, sir; east wing."

"All right. I say, old man," says Oswald apologetically, stopping midway upstairs to look back at his cousin, "I hope you won't mind, but you know what Sir George is at Christmas-time. He will ask *everybody* all at once, and this time he has so outdone himself that we have been obliged to double-bed some of the larger rooms. They've put one of the young Ormsbys into yours; a quiet lad, nineteen or so; steady, respectable, warranted not to bite, but rather a bore for you, nevertheless, I'm afraid."

"Warranted not to snore would be more to the purpose," says Dugdale laughing.

"At all events it will only be for a day or two, as the Ponsonbys and the Blakes leave directly after Christmas. I'm awfully sorry

about it, but you know my father is incorrigible—never happy unless he has the house in an overflowing state. We have even had to put some of the girls in rooms with two beds to get space for the others."

"Well, it's large enough to admit of half-a-dozen beds," says Dugdale good-naturedly, as he enters the blue chamber and warms his hands thankfully before the huge fire burning in the grate. As he speaks he looks round him; it is, indeed, a charming room, handsomely furnished and as comfortable as the soul of man could desire. The extra bed, with hanging curtains of pale blue, to match the rest of the furniture, has been pushed into a corner, so as to take as little as possible from the grandeur of the "regular" bedstead that stands with its back up against the central wall of the apartment, as though resenting the intrusion of the foreigner.

"Well, hurry up, and let's get down to the dining-room," says Oswald; "I've a lot to say to you."

So much, indeed, that the night is far advanced before his say is said—the fact that he has lately become engaged to the "dearest girl in the world" having a good deal to do with this protracted conversation. Three o'clock has struck, and the distant sounds of merriment that reached them from the billiard room have long since died into nothingness, when at length Dick Dugdale, rising from his chair, declares with a yawn that sleep has mastered him.

He is a tall, lean, soldierly young man of about twenty-nine, with a singularly handsome face, and a skin browned by India's suns. He has, indeed, only just returned from the East—a good deal the slier for his sojourn there—and being heart-whole, and next heir to a baronetcy, has been, during the past week, the subject of some speculation amongst the women assembled at Travers Court.

"You won't lose your way, will you?" says Oswald, as he bids him good-night on coming to a landing where their roads separate. "You know the house too well for that."

"I *should*," says Dugdale laughing. "This house has been my home too often to let a few years destroy all memory of it."

He goes softly down the corridor that leads to his room, calling out a last subdued good-night, and walking delicately as Agag might, lest he should disturb the slumberers on either hand. A vague suspicion that perhaps after all he *doesn't* know his own room as well as he had believed, rouses a mingled sense of consternation and amusement in his mind, so that when he comes to his door he opens it cautiously and not without a certain sense of trepidation.

All right, however! The large chamber presents itself to him in colours blue as the sky; the fire still burns as cheerily upon the hearth as it did three hours ago. Capital servants the Travers

always *have* kept, by the way ; unless, indeed, the present glowing furnace is to be attributed to the zeal of his sleeping partner in this room. By the way, what sort is he ?

Flinging the coat he has just taken off upon a chair near him, he turns his gaze upon the bed at the farthest end of the room—the bed in the corner ; the bed appropriated to the steady, quiet, respectable nineteen-year-old lad, warranted not to bite, of whom Oswald had spoken in such glowing terms, to find it—empty. Mechanically he directs his attention upon the bed proper to find it—full !

Why, confound that Ormsby boy ! Was there ever such impertinence—such sybaritish selfishness ? His heart, however, melts within him as he gazes upon what there is to be seen of this model of iniquity. What a *small* head ! with what a wealth of curling hair ! A mere boy it must be, in sore want of a barber.

A timid boy, too ; evidently afraid of ghosts or such-like midnight visitants, as he has tucked the clothes right round his neck, and *almost* over his head. A mere child he must be, with brows as white as that, and with breathing so soft, so noiseless, that one might well believe him dead.

Dead ! Dugdale had heard of corpses being discovered in double-bedded rooms before this—it is, indeed, quite an orthodox good old story ; but to have it come *home* to him in this abrupt way is not half so pleasant as the mild imagining of it. To read of a tragedy is one thing ; to be mixed up with it is quite another.

Taking up the candle he advances quickly towards the bed, and looks down upon the owner of those short brown curls.

Great heaven ! what is this ? By a miracle alone Dugdale prevents the candlestick from falling with a crash to the floor ; by a miracle, too, he represses the exclamation that rises to his lips. The steady, respectable Ormsby boy, “ warranted not to bite,” has resolved himself into—a *girl* !

And such a lovely girl, too ! The little, pretty, soft, dishevelled curls, brown as hazel-nuts, are lying on a forehead white as Parian marble. The rounded cheeks are flushed with sleep’s fond heat, the long dark lashes lying on them, making a tender contrast with the crimson ground beneath ; the lips, red as cherries ripe, are softly, indolently closed. It occurs to him that they might open at any moment, and then——

Well, THEN ! not the lips, but the eyes open. Large dark eyes, heavy with slumber scarcely broken, and for an instant they gaze straight up at him, vaguely troubled—softly uncertain. Up to this point Dugdale has been rooted to the spot. To say that he is filled with amazement would be but to give a poor explanation of his feelings ; that he is frightened to death would be far nearer to it. Now, seeing those half-conscious eyes on his, he gives way altogether.

Hastily extinguishing the tell-tale candle, he makes a dash for

his coat, and then for the door, and rushes blindly down the now dark corridor. Towards the end, seeing a light gleaming from one of the apartments, he makes for it in desperation, and—yes—thank heaven, there are two beds here also, the room is distinctly blue—he must have found his haven at last.

Sinking into a chair, he presses his hand to his forehead, and listens with all his might. Will she scream? rouse the house? Has she mistaken him for a burglar? Or—blessed hope!—has she been so little awakened that his rapid exit may have left her under the impression that all she saw was but the outcome of a dream?

Somewhat relieved by this thought, he prepares once more for bed. *This* time, at all events, he has made no mistake, the loud and healthy snores that come from the couch in the corner preclude the smallest possibility of doubt. All then may yet be well. That one hasty glance of hers could have told her nothing, and there is no other clue. Placing his fingers in his waistcoat pocket to take out his watch, he at once grows rigid with consternation and a look of horror overspreads his face! His watch! He has left it behind him! It is probably at this moment ticking away—with quite disgraceful indifference to its owner's agony—upon *her* table! Alas! for that dream theory of his! Dreams come and go, but leave nothing tangible behind them.

* * * * *

"I say, where's Lilian?" asks Oswald, looking up from the game-pie he is discussing. "Not like her to be late."

"No; she is generally up to time," says Lady Rattleton, a lively-looking blonde, casting a sharp glance all round the breakfast-table. "She didn't like that beating you gave her at billiards last night, perhaps, or else for once in her life she is lazy."

"Wrong in both surmises," says Lady Travers, glancing from behind the huge silver urn, as the door opens, and a little slight girl, almost childlike in face and form, comes into the room. Very nervously she comes forward, changing from white to red, and from red back again to white, as she does so. "Well, Lily! come at last, dear?"

Dugdale's heart gives a big jump. That pretty head, with its short nut-brown curls, harmless as it seems, strikes terror to his soul. He grows almost vehement in his attentions to his left-hand neighbour—a gaunt old maid with spectacles. Anything, rather than meet the eyes of this little hesitating new-comer.

"Glad you've come, Lilian. We were just going to have the lake dragged."

"Really, Miss Englethorpe, you should give us notice when you intend to retire into private life. The anxiety we have undergone up to this would——"

"Slept it out, Lil?" questions her brother, a tall Guardsman, who is at the sideboard busy with a ham.

"She looks rather as if she hadn't slept at all," says Sir George Travers, her kindly host, drawing a chair up close to his own, and beckoning her to come to him.

"That blue room is haunted," says Augusta, the eldest daughter of the house; "I *warned* you about it, Lil. Well, what did you see? Who entered your room last night? Let us hear the ghastly details."

Poor Miss Englethorpe! Dugdale's heart dies within him as he sees the cruel crimson that, rising, colours her cheeks.

"By Jove, I think you've hit it," says her brother, mightily amused by this blush. (Brothers ARE such brutes!)

"Come, tell us, Lily! The actual person who sees a ghost is so much preferable to the person who knows somebody else who has seen a ghost. Was it a man?"

Good-breeding so far stands to Miss Englethorpe that, though now deadly pale, she refuses further to betray herself. As for Dugdale, gazing on that brave little face, he feels as if he *must* rise and say something. But *what*? That is the question that reduces him to absolute nothingness.

"Had he his head under his arm?" persists Lady Rattleton, with the loud laugh that is commonly, and rather justly, supposed to proclaim the vacant mind.

"Or a dripping sword, perchance," says the Guardsman, who, being her brother, is of course the last man in the world to ever dream of looking at her.

"Come, come, come," cries Sir George quickly. "A truce to all such idle jests. Can't you see that the little one has a headache? A cup of tea for her, Oswald, *that* will exorcise the demon, I hope! Have you seen the last about these Whitechapel murders? Eh?—eh? Such a disgrace as they are to civilization." And so on. The good old host compels them all to follow him far away from Miss Englethorpe and her worries.

"Now, once for all, we *must* be in time to decorate the church," says Augusta Travers presently, who is commonly supposed to be an admirer of the rector's—a happy, *un*-married man! "We have only this one clear day before us, and we'll hardly get our work through before Christmas dawns."

"What hour are we to meet at the church?"

"Half-past eleven, sharp."

"And it is now—— By Jove, what *is* it, now, by anything reliable?" asks Oswald, staring at the clock on the mantelpiece, that points stolidly to twenty past two. "That clock has gone down. I say, Dugdale, you are the last-comer from the seat of war; give us the news—the time."

We have all heard of the word "limp." It, and it only, describes Dugdale at this moment.

"Eh?" says he, with a view to gaining time. An awful consciousness that two large brown eyes are at this instant fixed upon him renders him almost paralyzed.

"My dear fellow, straight from town as you are, you can of course give us the right time."

"There you overrate my strength," says Dugdale, recovering himself by a supreme effort. "The fact is, I was so tired last night that I forgot to wind my watch, and when I looked at it this morning I found it had meanly run down. So sorry!"

He quite forgets to hope that heaven will forgive him this pious fib in his anxiety to see how *she* has taken it. She has evidently taken it most satisfactorily. The white and frightened face that was turned on him a moment since now looks half-relieved. That "*I looked at it this morning*," had been very clever; she had accepted it as the noble truth. She is still timid, unnerved, but her glances are no longer directed specially towards him; they are divided amongst the other men sitting all round the table.

As they rise from the latter, Augusta comes up to Dugdale.

"I think you and Miss Englethorpe are the two people unknown to each other here," says she. "That should be a bond of union between you." She laughs, the little unctuous laugh peculiar to stout people, and introduces Dugdale to Lilian.

"Now don't be half a century getting into your walking things," says she to Miss Englethorpe. "You have a big day's work before you in the church. Persuade Captain Dugdale to give you his assistance and you will make the parish your friend for ever."

At this, Miss Englethorpe says a word or two as in duty bound, and Captain Dugdale answers it. The result being that the former finds herself behind a pair of ponies half an hour later with the latter holding the reins. This conjunction brings them speedily to the church doors, where divers spoken plans for celebrating Christmas are making the air loud.

Miss Englethorpe being of an energetic turn of mind, soon separates herself from the idle members of the flock and gives herself up to the working section thereof.

Holly, ivy and certain hothouse plants sent in from the conservatories around, are scattered profusely about the altar and all down the aisles. The rector, clad in distinctly mundane garments, is moving about briskly from pillar to post giving instructions to the unlearned—a large class.

Quite towards the end of the afternoon Miss Englethorpe, finding herself alone at the base of the pulpit with an ivy wreath in her hands that cries aloud for some resting-place, looks round her and sees at a distance, Dugdale. He is coming towards her, and smiles as he meets her eyes, but what is there about him that

kills the answering smile that had risen to her lips? Dugdale gives a hasty side-glance at himself and finds he is in his shirt-sleeves—having flung off his coat awhile ago to go to work with a greater zeal. Good heavens! he was in his shirt-sleeves that last, that *first* time she saw him! Could it be possible that a remembrance of that unfortunate moment is slowly wakening within her? What if she should ever arrive at a *certainly* about that fatal mistake of his?

Making a hasty snatch at his coat he flings that unoffending garment over the tell-tale shirt with quite an angry air, and turns once more to Miss Englethorpe.

"Now, what can I do for you?" says he, with as unconcerned a manner as he can assume at so short a notice, and with his heart beating to such a violent degree.

"Nothing, thank you," returns she icily, moving abruptly away, and then as if ashamed of her petulance, or not knowing positively that she has reason for it, she looks round at him. "Well, there is this," she says with hesitation, glancing at her wretch; "where shall I put it?"

"I'll show you," says he briskly, a weight lifted from his heart. After all she does *not* know. And what a lovely face it is that now is looking into his, not, however, without a strange suppressed anxiety, that might be called doubt, visible in it.

To combat this doubt he makes the object of his life for the next half hour, and has congratulated himself that he has succeeded, when suddenly Miss Englethorpe puts hope on that subject to flight.

"What o'clock is it?" asks she, so nervously, that it is impossible not to notice her agitation. Dugdale makes a laudable effort to conquer the situation, and fumbles in the pocket where that confounded watch *should* be as thoroughly as though he honestly believes it is there to be found.

"Oh, by Jove! of *course*," says he, "I forgot I hadn't wound it last night, and that it still lies on my table. Let me tell you a secret," speaking very carefully, but rather fast. "I am one of those fellows, you know, who *hate* a watch and never wear 'em, if they can get out of it."

"No, I don't know any of them," says Miss Englethorpe slowly. He can feel her eyes upon his face, and after a swift glance knows that they are full of tears, frightened, *shamed* tears! Her whole soul is in these anxious eyes, and he understands instinctively that it is the uncertainty of it all that is so terribly distressing her. He feels like a murderer as he sees the tears, and he feels too, with greater justice, that he is developing into a most consummate liar.

"Well, now you know *one*," says he with what he tells himself is quite an awful sprightliness. "A watch to me is a bore, hardly to be endured. Just now and again it is a useful thing, I dare-

say, but as a rule—— I should not wonder for instance if you never saw me with mine the whole time I am here.”

“What a pity! Is—is it a nice watch?” asks Miss Englethorpe, with what he is pleased to see somewhat recovered spirits.

“Far from it,” promptly. “Beastly old thing; silver. My father gave it to me or I shouldn’t carry it with me at all.”

Alas! for the generosity of that good father, whose gift had most assuredly been golden.

But Lilian (he has already even at this early stage of their acquaintance begun to so designate her) is for the time satisfied, and what is a father in comparison with a pretty girl? For the rest of the evening everything goes smoothly between her and Dugdale, and the next day, Christmas day, passes without a hitch, and is indeed remembered by both long afterwards as having been the happiest they had ever spent. If at times Miss Englethorpe feels little icy thrills of fear stealing over her as she thinks of that watch lying perdu beneath her laces upstairs (she had been afraid to put it in her jewel-case, the girls in the house having quite a mania for overhauling that charming receptacle), she resolutely puts such fears behind her, and with as good courage as she can, enjoys the present. Sooner or later she knows she will have to stand face to face with her midnight visitor, will have to return that watch, and thereby bring utter confusion upon her head; but until then, let her be happy. Her one devout prayer, incessantly breathed is—that whoever it is that terrible apparition may resolve itself into, it will *not* be Dugdale. Oh, no, not Captain Dugdale, *any* one but him; and surely, it couldn’t be he. She has his own word for it, or nearly so. *His* watch—that mysterious one he hates so much, that seemingly no man has ever yet seen—is silver, whilst hers—that is—*his*—that is—the WRETCH’S—is gold! No; he, Captain Dugdale, would not wilfully deceive her, and yet—— Always an unwelcome doubt remains behind.

Aid to this doubt is given from the most unexpected sources. Human spite has nothing to do with it, as no one can possibly know anything about the fiasco save she and—that other. Some impalpable imp must have taken it in hand, and found its pleasure in tormenting her. The first shock had come at that memorable breakfast; the second, when she had seen Dugdale for the first time (*was* it the first time?) in his shirt sleeves in the church; the third arose out of the *tableaux vivants* that the Travers girls would get up. These doubts have all to do with Dugdale, but besides these she is harassed with speculations as to other guests in the house. Dugdale apparently is not the only one who does not possess, or can’t at all events produce a watch. The Hon. Bertie Lightwood, a near-sighted little mortal, more dead than

alive, never wears one, and George Hardup, a stalwart dragoon, *says* he has left his in town to be repaired.

In the tableaux it so happens that Miss Englethorpe and Captain Dugdale are cast for the scene from Tennyson's "Sleeping Beauty," where the latter is roused from her sleep of a hundred years by a kiss from the wandering Prince. The other tableaux had gone off pretty well. Lady Rattleton indeed as "Diana Vernon" had scored a distinct success, and Oswald Travers with his *fiancée*, a gentle little thing, with intelligent eyes, were very well thought of as "Una and the Lion;" there had indeed been some difficulty about the get-up of Oswald as that remarkable beast—he was the lion—but when he had been smothered in two bear, three opossum, and one leopard skin, he was considered a very creditable article indeed. He was at all events unique of his kind, and that is everything.

But a little whisper has got about that "The Sleeping Beauty" is to be the event of the evening, and now, as the curtain slowly (and with several heart-stirring checks) rises, rumour for the third or fourth time proves true. Beyond all doubt Miss Englethorpe is a beauty! Every man in the room, and even a few women, acknowledge this undeniable fact.

Lying there upon the crimson-covered couch in her delicate white robes, with her nut-brown curls nestling amongst the red velvet of the cushions, Lilian Englethorpe looks lovely as a happy dream. The exquisite face is colourless, save for the scarlet lips and the dark lashes lying on the oval cheek. Had that dead past beauty of olden time, so dear to fairy lore and poets, been *half* so fair as this her modern representative, no wonder the Prince lost his head, but gained his courage, and made her his by that revivifying kiss!

So thinks Dugdale, as, compelled by his part—but yet a very willing servant—he bends over her. How sweet she looks! How kind! Yet if she knew all, would she not spurn him? *All*—yet how little! How delicately the lashes lie upon that perfect cheek! Oh! that the curtain might stay up for ever! Oh! that he dared, as did that old-world lover, to stoop and kiss and wake her into a new life—a life of love for him!

The curtain however, like time, takes heed of no man. Down it comes with a little bang; so suddenly that Dugdale, lost in his trance of admiration, forgets all about it. It is only when the large dark eyes open and look straight up into his impassioned ones that the fact of its descent dawns upon him. That fact, and another too. With a little sharp exclamation, Miss Englethorpe springs to her feet, flings back the crimson coverings that had partially covered her, and for a moment stands pale, defiant, horror-stricken before him. What is she thinking of? *What?* It seems to him in the midst of his consternation that he *knows*! Again, he sees himself in that blue chamber looking down upon

the sleeping girl. Again she wakes. Again her eyes uplift themselves to his—as they do now.

Miss Englethorpe has taken a step nearer to him; she has lifted her hand as though she would have spoken to him. There is in the strange deep glance of her eyes something of absolute agony. Her lips part.

All at once she turns aside, her hand falls to her side, and abruptly, nay brusquely, she passes him by, and disappears by the amateur wing.

Dugdale, who has grown a little pale, is the only one left to receive the plaudits of the assembled county.

* * * * *

She puts in no appearance at breakfast next morning, and Dugdale's heart sinks lower within him (if that be possible). Late in the afternoon, at the five o'clock tea, that seems to delight everybody, but at which *She* (really he has begun to regard her, so far as name is concerned, almost as the heroine of Mr. Haggard's novel) is also absent, and strolling leisurely into the library where this mild dissipation is, as a rule, carried out to its bitter end, Dugdale becomes aware of that crushing fact. He has hardly had his own cup, however, which neither cheers nor inebriates him, when a door opening on his left causes him to turn.

Yes, it is she. But a very pale and nervous she. A "she," too, fighting evidently against odds, that are of a spiritual nature and not open to the public. Dugdale, looking at her, feels puzzled.

His ignorance, however, is of short continuance. Miss Englethorpe has not been two minutes in the room when somebody—Lady Rattleton of course—says loudly :

"Whose watch is this?" As she speaks she lifts a gold watch from a small table at her elbow, with chain attached, and holds it up, as if for auction, to those around.

Dugdale's heart grows still. That it is his watch goes without telling. That *she*, unable longer to endure the suspense, unable, too, to retain so valuable an article, has at last decided on braving the worst, is clear to him. She had come in, had laid that vile time-piece upon the table, unseen by any one, and now, when all the guests are assembled, is waiting to learn—the truth.

Well, she shan't hear it from him at all events.

"A fine thing!—a very fine thing! And who is the owner of this fine thing?" cries Lady Rattleton in her shrill tones, dangling the watch to and fro, and challenging all men present. "Yours, Oswald? No? Yours, Mr. Lightwood? Yours, Sir George?" to her host. "No, *really*? It looks like an heirloom. Well, come, it *must* be yours, Captain Dugdale."

For a moment Dugdale hesitates; it is a hesitation so slight as to be almost unfelt—but in the most infinitesimal space of time

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quite a train of thoughts can present themselves. . If he repudiates the watch now he can never claim it again, and it is an old friend, the companion of many a year, and dear to him, as inanimate things sometimes will be. But not to deny all knowledge of it, with those large searching eyes gazing at him from the other end of the room, waiting breathlessly as it seems for his answer, is impossible to him.

"Mine? No," says he shaking his head, with a smile.

"Must belong to some of the other fellows. They'll claim it when they come in," says Oswald indifferently, as Lady Rattleton puts back the watch on the table where she had found it. Dugdale breathes more freely, and lets his glance turn to where Lilian has but just now been standing. She has gone into the embrasure of the window, however, and is sitting there on a pile of cushions, chatting with apparent gaiety with a young man, who is holding a tea-cup for her. She has not disbelieved him then? Once again he has escaped detection. Surely she could not laugh like that if she doubted. Yet—strange perversity—he almost wishes she *had* doubted, that she *knew*, that it was all over, and she had forgiven him. A growing dislike to the young man to whom she is making herself so agreeable, mingled with a sort of discomfort, hardly to be placed, induces him to leave the gay party round the tea-table and wander somewhat aimlessly into the music-room, a charming apartment, hung with pale pink cretonne, and with a huge bow-window facing south.

At this hour of the day it is sure to be deserted and free from fear of chance visitors. Glad in this thought, Dugdale stands moodily in the window chewing the cud of several bitter thoughts, when a light but hurried step behind causes him to turn. *Who* can be coming now?

It seems to him that he hardly knows her, as she stops short before him, her lips parted and her breath coming and going so rapidly that it almost appears to hurt her. Her agitation is so extreme that involuntarily he puts out his hand as though to support her, but she shrinks from him.

"Here," she says. "Take it. There is no reason you should lose it because—because of me!"

It is his watch she is offering him! Losing his head a little—his agitation now being even greater than her own—he would once more have denied all knowledge of it; but she restrains him.

"Oh no, no, NO!" cries she with sudden intense passion. "Do not say it again. It is useless. I *know*! I think I have known it all along."

She places the watch upon an ottoman near her, and makes a movement towards the door. Something tells him that if she goes now it will be for ever. With a touch of desperation in his manner he gets before her, and places his back against the door.

"Do not go like this," says he, his face as white as her own. "Let me say a word or two. Just *hear* me! After all, what was it? Lilian, let me speak."

He has put out both his hands and tried to take hers, but with a sharp little gesture she repulses him, and then—all at once as it were—she covers her face and breaks into a wild and bitter fit of crying; not loud sobs, but low and heavy, that shake all her slender frame. Turning abruptly from him, as though ashamed of this uncontrollable outburst, she hurries behind the curtains of the window, and leaning against the wood-work, cries as despairingly as a broken-hearted child.

"Is it worth such grief as this?" says Dugdale miserably, following her into the embrasure of the window. "It was only a mistake, when all is told. Mine—and an inexcusable one if you will—but not worth one of these cruel tears. I can't think *how* it happened; how I was so stupid, but——"

"Don't speak of it. I can't bear it," cries she with a stamp of her small foot.

"Far better speak of it, and be done with it for ever," says Dugdale. "You have been making a mountain out of a mere mole-hill, and if you won't let me show it to you as it really is, you will go on being miserable about it always."

"Very well; I'd *rather* be miserable," says Miss Englethorpe from behind her handkerchief, "though," with another sob, "if I am to be as miserable as this always, I shall soon die; that's *one* comfort."

"Not to me," says Dugdale. "Have you no pity for me? Do you think *I* have suffered nothing? That every nervous glance of yours has not been an agony to me? If I deserved punishment for my offence—which truly was an innocent one—why! I have endured it a thousand times. If you could forgive me now—if——"

"Oh! if it had been any one but *you*!" says she so *naïvely*, with such an unconscious betrayal of her real feeling for him, that Dugdale's heart beats high. Emboldened by this veiled admission, he very gently takes her in his arms, and presses her head down upon his shoulder.

"Why, if it had been, so much the worse," says he quickly. "You and I can keep the secret to ourselves, can we not? Lilian, may I tell you now, what you surely know already, but what I want so badly to put into words. I love you! Darling—*darling*, do you think you can like me—enough—to marry me?"

"Well, if it hadn't been for *that*," says she despondently; but considering she turns to him instead of *from* him as she makes this disheartening speech, Dugdale is not so much crushed by it as he ought to have been.

"If it hadn't been—you *could* have liked me?" asks he gently.

"Oh! what's the good of talking of it *now*?" says she with a heavy sigh.

"Not much!" says Dugdale mournfully. "But just for argument's sake, answer me."

"Well—yes," reluctantly.

"Then," says Dugdale with a base descent into ordinary gladness, "I shall insist on your liking me now, too, in spite of that unfortunate——"

"Oh!" cries she hastily, "don't mind that." She lifts one hand and lays it on his lips. "It is something else I want to talk to you about. Do you think, a—that is—that one person could ever love another person, when those two persons have only seen each other for ten days?"

"If you and I are those two persons—yes," says Dugdale with deep conviction.

"It is a very short time," says she doubtfully.

"The man who could see you for ten days and be still insensible to—— Well, never mind him, he would be beneath contempt," says Dugdale. "As for me, the very first time I ever saw you——"

"Oh, DON'T!" says she, hiding her face on his breast.

"On our very first introduction——"

"Dick! if you insist on talking about *that*—I—I *won't* marry you," says she indignantly.

"And if I don't, you will?"

"Oh! you *know* it," says she, so shyly, so sweetly, that he feels earth has no more to offer him.

"And now, not another tear," says he presently, when their raptures and explanations, and all the blessed vows that lovers from time immemorial have given and taken, have been gone through. "Here, take my handkerchief; yours is wet through. (Bless me, what ridiculous things girls use to be sure.) Not another tear shall you shed all your life through if *I* can prevent it. But there is one thing that has always puzzled me. May I ask you about it?"

"Is—is it about—*that*?" nervously.

"Yes. I want to know why both the rooms were blue?"

"That was Augusta's fault. She liked the old room so much, *yours*, that she had another done up like it—*mine*! I—I wish she hadn't."

"Well, I don't," says Dugdale. "One of the sweetest recollections of my life will be of a little soft brown curly head lying——"

Here Miss Englethorpe makes such a desperate effort to escape from his encircling arms, that he has to break off in the middle of his enthusiastic memories to circumvent her.

"Well, I won't—I swear it!" declares he. "Not another word on the subject shall pass my lips until we are such

an ancient Darby and Joan that it will seem like a dream to us."

"Now, you PROMISE, mind," says she and then pauses, so evidently full of a desire to say something else, that instinctively he says:

"Well?"

"There is just one thing that has troubled me most of all," confesses she, falling into a little whisper, and so turning her head that he can't see her eyes. "Was—*that time*—you know—was my hair *very* crumpled? Was," plucking nervously at the button of his coat, "was I looking *very* dreadful?"

"Oh! darling heart! *How* could you look that?" cries he straining her to his heart.

OUR FRIENDS IN THE HUNTING FIELD.

By MRS. EDWARD KENNARD,

AUTHOR OF "THE GIRL IN THE BROWN HABIT," "KILLED IN THE OPEN,"
"A CRACK COUNTY," ETC., ETC., ETC.

PART I.

1.—THE MELANCHOLY MAN.

WE all know the melancholy man of our hunt. Where is the hunt who has not one at least? Nine times out of ten he belongs to the wizened aristocratic type, and is unmistakably a gentleman, in spite of his pinched and woe-begone appearance, which, save for nice clothes, is worthy of a tramp on the road.

His features are good, but lean and fleshless; the nose well-shaped and inclined to be aquiline; but the complexion is of that dull, lustreless, purple hue which at first sight raises a suspicion of an unhealthy partiality for spirituous liquor, but which in reality comes from a torpid liver, a bad digestion and a defective circulation.

Is it necessary to state that he is a confirmed pessimist, who looks at everything with jaundiced eyes and from the darkest point of view? He cannot be cheerful if he would. Bilious headaches, chills and stomachic derangements render him a constant martyr. The unfortunate man can never forget that he has a body, and he is unable to rise superior to its depressing influences. His physical vitality is low and communicates dolefully with the brain.

You seldom meet him without his declaring in solemn, lugubrious tones, that England is going downhill as fast as she can, that her trade is a thing of the past, that she is rotten to the core, that the aristocracy are on their last legs, and that when the Queen dies we shall have a revolution and become a prey to anarchy, socialism and dynamitards. In his opinion, the army and navy are laughing-stocks for the rest of the world, as inefficient as they are grossly mismanaged, and if we had a big European war we should probably knuckle under without striking a blow. He refers with malicious glee to our reverses in South Africa, and looks upon the Irish question as a striking instance of England's effeteness.

As for fox-hunting, he loses no opportunity of stating that it has gone to the dogs altogether. Hounds, men, foxes, scent, have all deteriorated, and the good old days—if they really were good—have departed for ever. We no longer possess any horses worthy the name of hunter—they are either thoroughbred screws or the progeny of cart horses. We have allowed the foreigner to buy up our most valuable stock; and then, in our short-sightedness and crass stupidity, prided ourselves on the achievement. The love of sport is dying out. A spirit of disaffection is springing up. By the time our sons and daughters attain their majority, hunting will only be a memory of the past, and foxes will have disappeared from the face of the earth. After that, the deluge.

These are a few of the melancholy man's favourite topics of conversation, and he becomes gloomily eloquent when expatiating on them.

The weather is a continual source of annoyance and irritation to him. Needless to say, it is never just right, and he abuses the Englishman's proverbial privilege of grumbling at it.

If it rains, he is very miserable. It is a sight to inspire compassion in the heart of one possessing a robust organization, to witness the touching resignation with which he bends his lean body forwards and meekly bows his well-hatted head to the gale. Smiling faintly at his nearest neighbour, he says with unutterable woe:

"This is what we call pleasure!"

When the icy winds sweep over the broad Midland pastures, chilling horse and man alike, he shivers and shudders, growls like a bear with a sore head, and tries to restore warmth to his perished frame by beating it violently with his frozen hand, the fingers of which are dead, the nails a bluey white. Every tooth chatters, and he can scarcely articulate.

Poor man! with his sluggish blood and bad circulation, he feels the cold acutely. It seems to shrivel him up and drives him down to depths of wretchedness even blacker than those in which his spirit habitually resides. On such days he greets his familiars, as one by one they appear at the meet, with a dejected nod of the head and a "What fools we are to hunt! Just think that every time we go out on a morning like this and try to imagine we are enjoying ourselves, it costs us precisely a ten pound note."

"Oh! come, come, my dear fellow, it don't do to look at things in that way," says some strong, stalwart young man in reply, eager for a flourish over the fences. "We shouldn't care for any of our sports if we began to reckon up the costs."

"I can't help it," groans back the melancholy man, as a blast of cold air comes whistling over the uplands and cuts through him like a knife. "I'd give a fiver at this minute to be at home."

"Lord bless us!" responds the other cheerily. "Don't talk like that. Why, what on earth would you do with yourself if you didn't hunt? You'd die of *ennui*."

"Ah! that's where it is. You've hit the right nail on the head. After I've read my newspaper of a morning I don't know how the dickens to kill time. I think I'll go abroad."

"Not you. You'd be bored to death. Depend upon it, there's nothing like fox-hunting."

"One gets into a groove and can't get out of it," sighs the melancholy man; "but it's no use trying to persuade me that there is any enjoyment in this sort of thing. Phew!" as the wind catches his hat and it is only saved from rolling to the ground by the guard-string.

As our friend is so keenly sensitive to the inclemency of the elements, it might naturally be supposed that on a fine day, when the sun is shining overhead in a blue, clear sky, his mental condition would rise like the barometer. But such is by no means the case. The melancholy man is melancholy always. It is only a question of degree with him.

Imagine a bright frosty morning that acts on most people as a tonic. He starts from home, vowing that there cannot by any chance be a scent, which opinion he freely communicates to his friends with funereal solemnity. Should his predictions turn out incorrect, as is sometimes the case, he shifts his ground with considerable ability and in his low, sepulchral voice inquires if you have ever noticed how remarkably badly horses fence, and how sharp and black the shadows appear when the sun shines brightly.

"Take my advice, my dear fellow," he urges, "don't jump more than you can possibly help. The best of hunters can't see the size or depth of a ditch on such a day as this. Do you remember poor Tom Buckley? No? Well, three years ago Tom Buckley broke his leg through his horse blundering at a bottom and rolling head over heels. It was not the animal's fault. The sun was shining, just as it is shining now, and he could not see one bit what he was going at. Tom Buckley never was the same man after that fall. It played the bear with him. He got rheumatism and sciatica, and it ended by his having to give up hunting altogether. Poor devil! He does nothing now but dangle about the clubs, run after old ladies who go in parties, and play whist."

At this juncture his listener executes a hasty retreat. He feels that if he hears many more of the melancholy man's tales he shall not have an atom of nerve left. As it is, what between the frost and Tom Buckley's miserable fate, a cold shiver begins to creep up his spine. At last hounds are moving on and he gladly rides after them. He cannot exactly define the reason, but his friend's conversation nearly always produces a depressing effect—a sort of the-world-has-come-to-an-end kind of feeling.

Meantime, the real business of the day commences, and the despondency of the melancholy man increases. If hounds find and run well, his spirits grow lower and lower. He experiences none of that exhilaration which the chase is supposed to produce. On the contrary, he sees nothing but disasters and difficulties ahead. Every fence appears a man-trap, at which he confidently expects to meet with his death. For, needless to say, he does not ride hard, or love jumping for jumping's sake. His nerves and health are both too shattered to enable him to derive any real satisfaction from risking his neck over a country. He does not care for life. Not a day passes that he does not inveigh against it, yet, strangely enough, he is singularly loath to leave it.

Combined with certain unconquerable fears, he possesses a mad desire to be with the hounds. His great ambition is to be thought a forward man. He heartily disdains the roadsters, and takes every opportunity of abusing them. But in spite of his gallantry—which deserves all the more credit from being forced, and not natural—a line of gaps and gates does not always succeed in bringing him to the desired goal. Every now and again a stiff, unbreakable piece of timber, or a cold, glancing brook bars the way. Then come indecision, mental conflict, defeat. That stout ash rail is sure to break his bones, the water will give him his death of cold. No, he dare not take the risk. He tells himself that the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak; and so the chase sweeps on. Some get over, filling him with envy and a species of grudging admiration; others retrace their footsteps. Not infrequently he is left alone; alone, with no companion save black thought and dark, dark despair. He looks again at the obstacles, but alas! they do not diminish in size. Finally he turns tail and seeks a road, despising himself as he mingles with the mighty throng swarming on the macadam.

"What a garden ass I am to hunt," he mutters disconsolately, for the run has been productive of nothing but mortification to him. Yet straightway arises the embarrassing question:

"What the deuce should I do if I didn't?"

There lies the root of the whole difficulty, and a very serious one it is. The fact is that, apart from his liver, his digestion and bodily ailments, the melancholy man has little to occupy his mind. He is not intellectual or self-contained, and his resources are nil. He has no work, no profession, nothing to fill up his time. His only aim in life is to try and amuse himself, and in that he signally fails. The commonest navvy, labouring by the roadside at breaking stones, is better off than he. At least, the hours do not hang heavy on *his* hands, and he can eat and drink without fear of the consequences, or speculating as to what patent medicine he shall invest in next. Our friend the melancholy man hunts, shoots, races, fishes and swears, but from none of these things—not even the latter—does he derive more than very temporary

satisfaction. When bantered by his acquaintance as to his habitual state of despondency, he asserts that it is constitutional; but would it be so if he were obliged to work for his living, if too much ease and comfort had not spoiled him in early life, and taught him to spend his entire existence wondering how he can kill time? As if Old Time would not rise up and defy so puny an opponent. No doubt his bodily infirmities are a sore trouble, and we sympathize heartily with him on this account, but has he not yielded too much to them and to the curse of idleness? Is he not just a little hypochondriacal?

He does nobody any harm. He is his own worst enemy, and more to be pitied than either laughed at or censured. But it would prove a good thing for the melancholy man if his house were to be burnt over his head, if he lost all his money, and found himself forced to gain a living by the sweat of his brow, instead of going hunting six days a week and grumbling the seventh. He would find his zest for pleasure increase if he no longer possessed the means of gratifying it, and time hang less heavy on his hands when he had some occupation. Too much ease, too much luxury, too much self-indulgence, these things produce melancholy, and are responsible for half the bad livers and the bad digestions in the kingdom.

2.—THE POPULAR WOMAN.

THE popular woman is generally a fortunate one. In fact, she owes her popularity in great measure to her good fortune, for she has certain conditions in her favour, without which she might vainly have aspired to the title that distinguishes her.

Looks by themselves are not sufficient to insure a solid social success. To begin with, they do not stand the test of time, and opinions are apt to vary so much on the subject. In proof of this statement, are there not numbers of young and pretty married women in the hunting field who ride obediently behind their husbands, stuck to them as if by glue, and who almost entirely escape observation? They never by any chance have a masculine friend, and their discretion is quite remarkable. Even that sour-tongued Mrs. Grundy fails to detect a flaw in their conduct. They are beautiful but dull, highly estimable but unresponsive to a degree, in short just what good nice women should be. Nobody talks much either to or about them. And the reason? Oh! the reason is simple enough, and the dear creatures are not, perhaps, quite so good as they seem.

Their husbands are nearly always either too loving and attentive or too severe and jealous. Their ideas of marital duty are horribly strict—at least on the female side: they have a separate set for their own guidance—and so the poor wives, who doubtless all possess an embryo germ of popularity, have no chance of developing it.

They are meek dummies, who accept their lot and who allow their individuality to be merged in that of the lordly personage they have chosen to espouse. Some of them are willing slaves, others grumble, but dare not rebel. Now the popular woman is not hampered in any way. She enjoys liberty of speech, liberty of action, liberty even of conduct. She can do and say pretty much what she likes without being called to account. Is she single? you ask. No, certainly not.

She has a husband, but he is an amiable nonentity, or if not wholly a nonentity, she knows so well how to manage him that he seldom interferes. He yields to superior merit, and plays quite a secondary and subordinate part in the establishment. He hardly ever knows who's coming to dinner, or the names and number of his guests. His wife grasps the reins of power in a firm grip, and does not relax her hold for a minute: she is a sharp woman, and knows that if she loosed the matrimonial cords, ever so slightly, her popularity would soon become imperilled.

Her husband is a very rich man, and owns one of the most beautiful places in the county. He is generously constituted and allows her to spend what she likes. His own tastes are extremely simple and child-like, and very little contents him.

Both he and his better-half are excessively hospitable, and keep regular open house. He is the last person in the world to find fault, yet sometimes he cannot help wishing for a quiet hour to himself. The neighbouring town is furnished with a cavalry barracks, and the officers are always dropping in to every species of meal. Sometimes they spend a long and happy day, beginning at about eleven in the morning and lasting until twelve at night. But Monsieur is much too wise to make any objection. It is Madame's affair. If it pleases her to have a lot of young fellows perpetually hanging about the place, well and good.

In truth she lavishes her invitations broadcast, and especially amongst the engaging males of her acquaintance. She feeds them with game, venison, truffles, *foie-gras*, cream ice, hot-house fruit, and all the delicacies of the season, and they go away highly satisfied, declaring in their own expressive language that they have been awfully "well done." And to be "well done" is the first secret of gaining that refined, delicate, fine-fibred thing, a man's heart.

"Poor old Charlie's" wine (as they call their host) also meets with unqualified approval. His sherry is "ripping." His tawny port "A 1." They testify their appreciation by the number of bottles which they cause to disappear at every visit, and by the frequent recurrence of those visits. Liberal Charlie's best Cuban cigars, a box of which is always open, also meet with commendation. His guests help themselves freely and puff away with great enjoyment at the fragrant weed, sitting meanwhile in careless attitudes on the sofa by Mrs. Charlie's side. These gallant soldiers treat their

hostess with tender familiarity, and they play like children with her gloves, her fan, or her lace pocket handkerchief, every now and then, quite by accident, letting their great clumsy fingers come in contact with her pretty jewelled ones. On such occasions she takes no notice, for Mrs. Charlie is not strict, neither is she a prude. The nineteenth century has set its face against pruders and she goes with the times. As for tobacco, she vows she has not the faintest objection to it (though she never allows her husband to smoke in her presence when they are alone), and declares that nothing pleases her more than to see her guests making themselves at home. They take her at her word. Who could doubt the veracity of so charming and sensible a person? She delights in a good story, and is not irremediably shocked by a naughty one. She reproves, but forgives the teller in a way which makes the naughtiness appear almost virtuous, and restores the self-confidence of the narrator.

In return for the many substantial benefits received and the material advantages gained, the artless youths who are entertained so sumptuously by the popular woman, are disinterested enough to dangle about her saddle out hunting, to pay her compliments, varying in sincerity, and to indulge whenever they meet, in that light meaningless banter which is known in the English language by the name of "chaff." They carry their devotion to such an extent that young and pretty girls quite ten or fifteen years junior to Mrs. Charles are left almost entirely neglected. But then they have no good dinners to give, no comfortable house to offer as a club, and are not the possessors of a large income. Masculine admiration is composed of a good many mixed ingredients. It is not all "I love and adore nothing but your own sweet self." To do the popular woman justice however, in spite of a tolerably pronounced partiality for young men, she knows how to render herself extremely pleasant and agreeable to all classes. She makes it a rule never to turn up her nose at anybody, and when in the hunting field goes out of her way to say a few cheery words to each of the numerous ladies of her acquaintance. She knows that they all possess tongues, and considers it better policy to conciliate them than offend, for she is quite aware that these dear female friends of hers tell little spiteful stories against her behind her back, although to her face they are all civility and amiability.

Mrs. Charlie is not a person to quarrel with lightly, for every winter she gives a ball, and besides that, is constantly getting up theatricals, concerts, bazaars, &c. Every one likes to be asked to her parties. They give the young ladies a chance of meeting young men, and the dowagers an opportunity of tattling and gossiping. True, when the festivities are over there are some ungrateful enough to call them *omnium gatherums*, but what does that matter? It does not prevent the very same people from seeking invitations on the following year.

Mrs. Charlie knows all that goes on in the county. One or two of her greatest friends and staunchest adherents are always ready to repeat every ill-natured remark, but she has the good sense to take little heed, and when she meets the offender makes no alteration whatever in her conduct. For the popular woman is very good-natured, even although it be with that light, superficial good-nature which proceeds mainly from a cold temperament, a robust constitution, and a profound content with self.

She is proud of her popularity, and would make a good many sacrifices to retain it, and her husband is proud of it also, perhaps even more so than she. It never enters his honest head to imagine that the swarms of friends who invade their household resemble flies buzzing round a treacle pot. When the treacle is all gone, very few of them will remain.

The worthy fellow entertains a profound admiration for his successful wife. He believes in her, and trusts her implicitly, and nothing pleases him more than to see what a universal favourite she is.

The farmers to one man adore Mrs. Charlie. She talks to them in her fluted, silvery tones—those tones which have just a touch of patronage and exaggerated sweetness about them, and inquires with well-simulated interest after their affairs, the prospects of agriculture, the price of grazing stock, and the birth and parentage of the young 'un they bestride. Their good-humoured bluntness and unconcealed admiration please her. It makes her sigh now and again over the little vein of insincerity that runs through her own character, but she likes the honest fellows none the less on that account, and at every race-meeting plies them with champagne and pigeon-pie, until they drink her health in a salvo of applause.

The popular woman rides well to hounds, and looks remarkably neat on horseback. Her hunters render it difficult to keep the tenth commandment, so perfect in make and shape are they; and the rider does them justice. She has the best fitting habit in the whole hunt, and the number and elegant patterns of her waistcoats drive other sportswomen to despair. Such spots, such stripes, such delightful checks and combinations, where on earth do they come from? Mrs. Charlie has no concealments on the subject. She is open and kind to a degree. She tells everybody who her tailor is, where he lives, how much he charges, and invariably winds up by declaring that as regards her own personal expenditure no one could be more economical than herself. "My dear, I never spend more than twenty pounds a year on my hunting clothes." But lo and behold! on application to the tailor, he respectfully informs his customers that Mrs. Charlie has a bad memory, and labours under some strange mistake as regards price, whilst the piece of horse-cloth from which her last waistcoat was made, was specially woven, and cannot be procured for love or

money, since the loom has accidentally been destroyed. So the would-be imitators retire discomfited, only to gaze with renewed envy at Mrs. Charlie's hunting attire, which even her greatest detractor cannot help admitting is perfect. She seems to possess some secret unattainable by others of her sex. Their hair comes down; hers never does. Their elastics break; her skirt always keeps in its place. Their faces get flushed and red; she invariably retains the same cool pink and white complexion, with which she sallies forth of a morning. And then what a waist she has for a woman of her age. Straight and well as the popular woman rides, she misses many a good run through her inveterate love of "coffee-housing." When jogging from covert to covert, instead of keeping up with hounds, she generally sinks back to the very tail of the procession, accompanied by one or two chosen individuals. Here she becomes so interested in lively badinage of a flirtatious nature, or else in listening to the latest gossip of the hunting-field, that she frequently misses her start, and prefers riding about the roads with the reigning favourite rather than go in for a stern chase. She seldom experiences much difficulty in finding a companion, for she is a lively and entertaining personage, with manners highly agreeable, if a trifle artificial, and the light tone of her conversation is finely suited to the majority of idle young fellows who like to be amused, and who neither care for nor appreciate high intellectual attainments in a woman. Mrs. Charlie prefers the anecdotal-biographical style, and her smart remarks in this particular branch generally call forth great applause, and are greeted by bursts of laughter.

Her male friends talk of her familiarly as "an awfully good sort." Few of them can conceive of higher praise than contained in these words.

So the popular woman proceeds on her triumphant way, starting fresh admirers, and making new acquaintances every season, yet having the social tact to keep up with her old ones whenever it is possible. Her life is a light, easy, happy one, surrounded by every comfort and all that money can give.

But if we look closely into the cause of her popularity does it not appear that great part of it is due to no less a person than poor old Charlie—that pleasant, easy-going individual who adores his wife, who lets her do exactly as she likes, and who furnishes the sinews of war without a murmur?

Would or could Mrs. Charlie have attained to the position she occupies of "popular woman of the hunt" had she been mated to a surly individual, mean and close-fisted, who refused to let her ask a soul to the house without his express permission, and who threw every conceivable obstacle in the way of her social advancement? Popularity cannot be achieved without a certain amount of liberty. Women know this, and men know it too, though they won't admit it, and profess to despise the Charlies of this world.

Wives are so much better, crushed and kept in good order. At any rate, without her husband's passive support Mrs. Charlie would have encountered many difficulties. He gave her house, money, position, and all the conditions necessary to insure success, and whilst she climbed the ladder, he remained content to play second fiddle to "the popular woman."

There are men, and men. Let us give him his due.

(To be continued.)

MRS. HAWTREY'S ADVENTURE.

By LADY DUFFUS HARDY,

AUTHOR OF "BERYL FORTESCUE," "A DANGEROUS EXPERIMENT," ETC.

THEY, that is Colonel Hawtreys and his charming wife, fled to the Continent to avoid the severity of the English winter, and, having wandered through the highways and byways familiar to the general tourist, they at last, after many weeks of travel, found their way to the picturesque city of Algiers, intending to settle down there and rest for a time; and a more delightful resting-place they could not have chosen. The weather was exceptionally fine, in fact it was like an English summer; there was never a moment's dullness in the picturesque old town, rendered doubly picturesque by the conglomerated mass of humanity who flocked thither from all quarters of the globe, representing every nationality under the sun, from the wild Eastern tribes to the most highly civilized Christian—the stately Spaniard, the Arab, the swarthy Moor, the sturdy Briton in his tweed travelling suit, and the *flâneur* of the Boulevards, like a model of Paris fashions illustrated by a first-class tailor, all mingled together; the sombre garb of the one throwing out the brilliant hues of the picturesque costume of the other. The variegated colours and contrasted toilettes, the sprinkling of Moorish women in their long white robes, made the promenade like a living kaleidoscope of many-patterned humanity.

In the city the hotels were filled to overflowing; on every side there was gaiety and amusement to be found; and when people got tired of the life of music, roses and champagne, they could drive out in the country, or wander through the green fields—green as our own home meadows—and gardens filled with roses and lilies, while, in the more uncultivated ways, the loveliest wild flowers sprang up wherever they could find room to plant their dainty feet.

The gay open-air life of continental cities is a striking contrast to life in London, where the delightful features of garden parties are few and far between, and where our festal hours during the hot summer weather are spent in the suffocating atmosphere of crowded ball-rooms, or the still more heated and unhealthy theatre or concert rooms; but that we cannot live an outdoor life is the fault of our climate, not of our choice.

The colonel and his wife sat one evening on the balcony of their hotel, in the glow of the setting sun, looking out over the beautiful bright waters, which reflected the floating clouds and the glorious glow of the sunset as in a mirror, the tired shadows giving a weird mystery to the scene; they had travelled so far and were lying so restfully now on the face of the water! A pale haze hung like a flimsy veil over the land and sea scape, adding a subtle charm to, rather than concealing a single feature of it. A dainty breeze seemed to fall straight from heaven, fanning the cheeks and stirring the spirit with a sense of languorous delight.

The lady lounged lazily in her chair. Her eyes seemed to be looking at something not on the scene before her, and there was a drooping of the under lip, as though she were thinking of no agreeable subject. The colonel had deposited his stalwart person on one chair and his legs on another, and with his soft felt hat tilted over his eyes and his beloved havana between his lips, seemed oblivious of everything, luxuriating solely in his own personal ease and comfort; his wife broke the silence.

"Harry, I should like to leave this place to-morrow," she said.

"Why?" he inquired drowsily, "I thought you decided yesterday that you would remain here for another week."

"Yesterday isn't to-day," she answered. "Yesterday I said stay—to-day I say go!"

"In heaven's name, why have you changed your mind?" he exclaimed, waking up thoroughly.

"Well," she answered, looking straight before her, "I don't like that pale-faced man."

"What pale-faced man?" growled the colonel. "It seems to me that *we* are the only pale-faces here, the rest are all mahogany-coloured, to put it in the most complimentary way."

"Well, I mean that man who wears the ridiculous plume in his hat. I don't know whether he is a Greek, an Italian, or what; but you must have remarked him, he has the cadaverous pallor of a sick negro, and I—don't like him!" and as she spoke she gave her parasol a vicious twirl in the air.

"Poor fellow! that's not his fault—he can't help the colour of his complexion; as for your not liking him, perhaps it is as well for *my* peace of mind you don't; those fascinating foreigners are dangerous animals."

"Bah! I hate the whole tribe, with their posturing and imposturing; they're made up of grins and shoulder-shrugging. He pretends not to understand English, yet he's always hovering round, listening to all we say, and when you are walking or talking to any one he follows like your shadow, as slowly and stealthily."

"Well, my dear, a shadow is harmless enough; what else?" inquired the colonel lazily.

"Why, I strongly object to the place he occupies at table; he

always will sit opposite to *us*, and there he sits, eating in the coarsest, vulgarest way, putting his knife half-way down his throat—I wish he'd swallow it; and then he's always staring at me—I can't eat and drink in peace, he stares so: it gives me the indigestion."

"Well, my dear Amy, you are worth looking at. Although we've been married ten years, I've a weakness that way myself. I can quite understand his chronic state of fascination; you are such a contrast to the swarthy beauties of his native land."

"It isn't that at all—of course I don't mind being looked at; one gets used to that," replied the lady complacently. "There is something sinister in his face, especially in the expression of his eyes, they are perfectly horrid, and I have a presentiment that if we don't move on something will happen; besides, only last night I dreamt——"

"Something is always happening," observed the uncomprehending spouse. "As for the dreams and presentiments that affect you so strongly, you know I don't believe in them."

"You don't believe in anything sensible," she answered pettishly.

"Oh yes, I do. I believe in the divine Patti, and in the powers of my own digestion."

"And nothing else?"

"That to-morrow comes after to-day," he rejoined lazily. "I don't think my belief generally goes far beyond that."

"Sh-'sh, here he is," exclaimed Mrs. Hawtrey, laying a tightening clasp on her husband's arm, as a shadow fell at their feet, and in another moment its owner strode into the rich glow of the sunset. He doffed his plumed hat, and in fluent Italian wished them "Good evening," and "hoped the signora was not too much fatigued from her excursion." She knew he was addressing her and answered him with a recognizing bow and a chilly smile, as she said to her husband *sotto voce*: "Get rid of him soon, Harry, do."

But the colonel was in no hurry to get rid of the soft-voiced stranger, being a gregarious animal and fond of his species; and above all, he was fond of airing his Italian, for though he was shaky in his grammar and crippled in his accent, he hobbled along like the devil on two sticks; and though his cruel maltreatment of the beautiful language must have made the native ear feel as though it were being bored by a gimlet, the courteous foreigner made no sign, but glided glibly along the pleasant groove of conversation, flattering the gallant colonel by his ready comprehension and reply rather than by words. There is nothing like making a man pleased with himself, and the colonel was eminently gratified by the way his floundering in the foreign language was received, and said somewhat reproachfully to his wife

"You always laugh at my Italian, but see how splendidly I get along. I almost feel as though it was my native language."

"I see how you stumble along," replied the lady with an air of superiority. "I should be ashamed to make such a goose of myself; he is laughing at you in his sleeve, though he's too much of a hypocrite to let you see it."

"That's the way you always sit on my head when I'm in good spirits," he exclaimed huffily, turning from his non-appreciative spouse to continue the conversation with his suave companion. His wife listened to the jumble of words which meant nothing to her uncomprehending British ears, and looked scornfully in the opposite direction.

"My dear," exclaimed the colonel in an audible whisper, "he says you've got such a beautiful voice, he's sure your accent in Italian must be divine—try and say something civil to him in Italian—do!"

"Shan't," replied Mrs. Hawtrey, with her wonted brusqueness; "English is good enough for me. Please do take him away; it gives me the fidgets to see him standing there grinning like an affected ape; and—look at his dreadful eyes! He's trying to mesmerize me—I know he is!"

"What nonsense you talk!" said the colonel rising abruptly; "your dislike to the man is getting to be a perfect craze. Well, we'll go for a stroll through the town—and relieve you of our society for a time at least." A few smiling words to his companion and away they went.

"Leave your money at home, Harry, or you'll come back with empty pockets," said Mrs. Hawtrey's warning voice, as she watched her tall soldier-like husband stride away, the pale stranger gliding like an attenuated shadow by his side; the magnificent physique of the one in striking contrast to the thin wiry figure of the other. A satisfied smile broke over Mrs. Hawtrey's beautiful face, for she was proud of that stalwart husband of hers, though he would not always see with her eyes, or be convinced against his will by the magic of her tongue.

She remained there lounging lazily in her seat, with half-closed eyes, till the sun had set and the soft grey twilight fell, veiling the features of the surrounding landscape in sweet mystery. She sat there drowsily dreaming till the great white moon set sail through the clear blue skies, illuminating the city as brightly as the light of day. She was only half conscious, and had no idea how late it was, till she was roused by her husband's voice, and opening her eyes saw him, and behind him slightly in shadow his companion.

"Come, wake up. I thought you had been in bed an hour ago; do you know it is nearly eleven o'clock?"

"Is it really?" she exclaimed blinking herself wide awake; "I think I must have been asleep."

"I should rather think you have."

"And what have you been doing all this time?" she inquired.

"Having a high old time in the town," he answered. "We've been to a concert and looked in at a wedding party, and—he's a capital fellow," he added jerking his head towards his shadow, "he's a Greek who has lived a great deal in Italy; his name's Leonides, and we've been organizing a delightful excursion for to-morrow."

"Is he to be of the party?" she inquired, interrupting him sharply.

"I don't see why he shouldn't be," returned the colonel; "*he* proposed it and he knows exactly where to go, and what we ought to see; and the excursion he proposes is one of special interest."

"I shan't go," said Mrs. Hawtrey decisively. "My excursion will be in an opposite direction."

"That is always the way when I want you to be friends with anybody—you're like a jibbing horse: the more I will, the more you won't!" he answered irritably.

"Now don't try to pick a quarrel, Harry," she said with a deprecatory shake of her head, "because I won't pick up your disreputable acquaintances. I don't want to interfere with you—you can go your way and I can go mine. If you prefer that grinning ape to me—well, I pity your taste, that's all!" She tossed her head and the colonel muttered something about "confounded bosh," adding, "Well, I've made the engagement, and I'm not going to go back on my word."

Now the colonel was far gone in the fascinations of this interesting foreigner, and wished his wife to follow in the same direction. Driving people together against their wills is not the way to make them friends; but the colonel was obtuse in some things, and in this instance his perceptions were as dim as a farthing rushlight.

Mr. Leonides glided to the lady's side and startled her by his soft sibilant whisper.

"Buona sera, signora," lifting his plumed hat and bowing lowly as he spoke.

"Bony Sarah! Don't Bony Sarah me," exclaimed the startled lady, glaring angrily at him; "I believe he knows I carry my diamonds in this bag and wants to Bony Sarah me into forgetting them."

"It is a good thing he doesn't understand English," said her husband grimly, "or he'd have a queer idea of the good breeding of English ladies."

"He's enough to startle anybody out of their good breeding, and turn their wits out of doors to keep it company," she answered as she gathered her belongings together and stalked wrathfully away without deigning another word or look to either gentleman and betook herself to her apartment.

The colonel lingered for a few moments and then followed her

example. He was by no means discomposed by his liege lady's belligerent position ; he was accustomed to his Amy's ways, and had no doubt he should find her in the morning dressed in her prettiest and most coquettish of costumes, ready to start on the excursion in the most amicable of moods ; but this time he may be said to have reckoned without his host ; for while he slept the dreamless sleep of the blessed, his lively lady was busily transacting a little business on her own account. She with the assistance of her maid packed up all her wearing apparel in a huge Saratoga trunk and then looked to see that her jewellery and money was all right in the leather bag which she invariably carried at her waist ; while so occupied she was suddenly startled by the sight of a face pressed against the glass, and a pair of dark eyes glaring in, apparently watching her movements.

"Ah ! there he is," she exclaimed impulsively, throwing open the window and darting out and along the verandah following a shadowy form, which, however, disappeared, she did not know how, before she got to the end of it ; there she paused, straining her eyes so as to pierce the distance, but there was nobody, nothing in sight, not even the shadow of the flying figure : she slowly returned along the verandah and re-entered her room.

"He was there, I saw him," she exclaimed half dreamily, half aloud.

"Saw whom, madam ?" inquired the bewildered maid.

"Ah ! I forgot," she answered, "you don't know anything about it—well, never mind : we had better try to get a few hours' sleep now ; for we may have to start off somewhere in the morning."

The next morning, the long breakfast table was fast filling with the numerous guests when the colonel marched into the room, his tall soldierly figure clothed in a spotless travelling suit of the best fashion, which fitted him to perfection, there was never any loose slovenliness about him, everything was always taut and trim ; he deposited his knapsack and soft felt hat upon a chair and glanced expectantly round as he took his seat at the table. In another moment Mrs. Hawtrey came unconcernedly into the room, her lovely corn-coloured hair arranged in tiny clustering curls, like a mass of ripening grain above her classic head ; she wore a figured tea gown with a long flowing train, evidently with no intention of going abroad. She was closely followed by the knight of the cadaverous countenance, who glided into the seat opposite to hers and bowed his usual "good morning ;" his white teeth gleaming like pearls between the thin red lips.

"So you are bent on staying at home," exclaimed the colonel with an unsatisfied look at his wife's *déshabille*.

"I'm bent on doing as I please," she answered loftily, quite indifferent to her Harry's disapproving gaze.

"We start in ten minutes," he growled from beneath his heavy moustache. "I do wish, Amy——"

"Now it is no use going on like that," she interrupted him, lifting her jewelled hand with a deprecating air. "You would have your own way and you've got it—there's no more to be said."

"But by Jove, there is more to be said!" exclaimed the colonel irritated by his wife's cool dignified demeanour; for the moment his dark eyes blazed enough to create an explosion in a lucifer match factory, but the fire passed as quickly as a flash from the gun's mouth—his wrath boiled over like a saucepan of hot milk and subsided as quickly: he added in a milder tone, "I should like to know what mischief you're going to be up to while I'm away." She smiled an aggravating smile.

"Don't trouble about me—mind your own business."

"You are my business—and a very complicated bit of business too," he answered with a peculiar sniff, adding, "I'm surprised, Amy, I really am, that you should set yourself in defiance of my wishes; St. Paul says, 'wives, submit yourselves to your husbands.'"

"Ah! that sort of thing has quite exploded," she added with a contemptuous wave of her hand, "and it is taking a great liberty with St. Paul to throw him at my head in that irreverent fashion. I say, 'man, submit yourself to me,' and you won't! but it doesn't matter, I don't complain; you paddle your own canoe and I hope you'll enjoy yourself."

"It is a farce to say that," he answered grimly; "you know well enough that I never do enjoy myself without you!"

"It is not for want of trying," she observed significantly. "You've made the attempt often enough—you can't *always* fail." Seeing the ominous fire kindling in his eyes, she added sweetly, "Now don't get into a passion, Harry, dear; you know it always flies to your head, and—see, everybody's looking at us; they'll think we're quarrelling and that is bad form in public."

One by one the guests were now leaving the breakfast table. The colonel, followed by their pale-faced *vis-à-vis* Leonides, strolled out on to the piazza and chatted for a few moments preparatory to starting; the lady saucily flung a parting shaft over her shoulder as she disappeared in the direction of her own room. The colonel followed her flying skirts for a few last words, a parting embrace, for he had the tenderest heart combined with the chivalrous spirit of a brave strong man, and he could not bear a crumpled rose leaf or an adverse breath to lie between his Amy and himself. He was as much in love with his wife now as on the day he married her, and though they often indulged in little sparring matches, as we have seen, it was to their mutual enjoyment, and added a *sauce piquante* to the commonplaces of daily life.

The two gentlemen started on their excursion, the colonel rather dolorously disposed; things had not turned out as he expected, and he did not at all like leaving his wife behind him; still he

would not yield the reins entirely into her hands, and allow her quite to control his movements, he would show his independence now or never. She watched them till they were out of sight and then proceeded to carry out her own plans. If he would not follow at her chariot wheels he must take the consequences of masculine insubordination!

Within half-an-hour of his departure she and her maid, with her tiny pet dog between them, started on an expedition on their own account. She left a letter on her dressing-table to greet her husband on his return; it ran thus:

“DEAREST HARRY,

I have planned a little excursion of my own. I take Watson with me. I hope to reach Bjarzik to-morrow night. We sleep somewhere on the way, I forget the name, and I couldn't spell it if I didn't. The people here have made all arrangements; they can tell you the route we take and all about everything. I have got my diamonds with me and plenty of money. I shall wait and amuse myself at Bjarzik till you are tired of your foreigner's fascinations and come and join your affectionate

“AMY.”

Within a few miles of the city the country grew very weird and desolate, they passed through tracks of wild uncultivated land, with ragged patches of palmetto scrub growing here and there, and the tall date palms rearing their stately heads in groups of some half-dozen together. Occasionally they came upon a grove of stunted straggling trees, some with bare branches twining fantastically together, some scantily clothed with sickly-looking leaves, which made the prospect doubly depressing when contrasted with the beautiful blue sky and flood of brilliant sunlight; the air was as soft and salubrious as our own spring breezes. They drove at a rapid rate; Mrs. Hawtreys quick impulsive nature hated anything slow, and to sit behind a pair of lazy jog-trot steeds was always a severe trial to her patience; now she thoroughly enjoyed herself and felt invigorated and refreshed both in mind and body, as their flying feet carried her along through the crisp fresh air. She chuckled to herself and wondered if her dear Harry was enjoying himself, and what he would think when he returned home and found his bird had flown.

As the day grew older the sun climbed higher, and hung like a ball of fire in the sapphire sky, and blazed down in scorching fury; the air grew hot and stifling, the strength of the horses began to fail, they soon became exhausted, perhaps their previous rushing speed had something to do with that, they began to crawl along the hilly broken road, every step seemed to be a labour; no wonder the foliage of the greenest trees grew shrivelled and sickly if they underwent this scorching torture often.

"Phew, how dreadful the heat is!" said Mrs. Hawtrey, leaning back in her uncomfortable seat. "I feel smothered, I can hardly breathe; I wonder when we shall get to a place of shelter?" She looked anxiously round, but there wasn't even a hovel in sight. She made inquiries of the driver, first speaking in tolerably good French; then she made an attempt at Italian: he understood neither, he only shook his head and pointed onwards. She began to have a hazy idea that she had better have stayed at home. Presently there was a change in the weather, as sudden as changes frequently are in semi-tropical climates; the sun blinked drowsily, as a few light fleecy clouds floated before its face, heavy raindrops began to fall, the clouds gathered and rolled like leaden billows through the sky; then the heavens seemed to open and a storm such as she had never before witnessed of thunder and lightning burst forth: it seemed as though heavy forces of artillery were having a pitched battle overhead. Meanwhile they were crawling along the desolate waste land; in vain the driver plied his whip, the frightened steeds could only stagger blindly on. The terrified women crouched in the bottom of the nondescript vehicle half dead with fear. In the course of some minutes, which to them seemed hours, they came in sight of some rather extensive ruined buildings; the most prominent feature still remaining was a dilapidated tower, standing on an elevation on their left hand. The driver turned his horses in that direction; they arrived within a short distance of it when he stopped and motioned them to alight; they did so and he drove away without more ado, as rapidly as he could urge his miserable steeds to go. Glancing forward in some bewilderment she observed a man and a woman standing beckoning her to come that way. She held her bag of valuables tightly in her grasp and clambered over a heap of rough stones; she could only distinguish the figures not the faces of the man and woman. As she got nearer the man stepped out from the shadow and stretched out his hand to relieve her of her bag and the ragged remnant of her dainty parasol, but she clutched it closer and looked up; her heart stood still, the blood froze in her veins, for she beheld the face of her enemy! There was the tall pale-faced man Leonides smiling at her. It never crossed her mind to wonder how he came there, she was only conscious of a kind of dull horror as she stared at him in voiceless terror.

"The signora is welcome." A startled look sprang to her eyes. "Ah! ah!" he added, "you surprise I spike the English?"

He might have "spiked" anything; her vivacious spirit was dead within her; she had not a word to throw to a dog; the events of the last two days, all she had said, all she had done, flashed, though in a blurred indistinct fashion, through her brain. He motioned for her to go before him, which she did, carrying her little dog in her arms. The woman standing in the low

dilapidated doorway stood aside for her to pass. She was most repulsive looking, she was tall and angular with coarse features and a bronzed complexion wrinkled by hard wear and exposure to rough weather rather than by age. She had but one eye and a large cavernous mouth with a few long yellow teeth like the tusks of a wild animal with wide gaps between. She grinned and muttered something in a low guttural tone as the lady hurried past her with a shudder she could not repress. The woman was worse than the man. The repulsive face photographed itself so distinctly on her mind, she would have recognized her again if they had met thereafter in any part of the world.

The man preceded her up a narrow winding stairway of crumbling stones, and she found herself in a small bare octagon-shaped room with narrow slits for windows, and these were partly overgrown with rank verdure. He stood beside her bowing and smiling his old evil smile. She found voice to say:

"Why have you brought me here? Do you mean to rob and murder me?" He deprecated the notion with many tender-sounding words in his mellifluous language. She wondered vaguely what had become of her Harry. His companion was here, but where was he and her maid? Why had Watson not followed her? Her brain reeled, she sank into a state of semi-consciousness, but dimly aware of what was going on round her. The woman came into the room, and she and the man kept up a whispering conversation; then they came near and bent over her, she felt their hot breath upon her cheek and his long lank fingers in the tangled mass of her yellow hair. They were still whispering, though she could not distinguish a word they said. She tried to scream, but she could not utter a sound, could not move even an eyelid; it seemed as though her physical powers were paralyzed, though her spiritual part was keenly alive.

Presently, when she gained command over herself, she was alone, and there was a small oil lamp burning in the room. She had no power to control her thoughts, they were all chaos and confusion. She felt a vague wondering why her Harry did not come in search of her, but it did not trouble her much. She lay listening, listening, but no human sound reached her ears—only the low sighing of the wind as it wandered round the old tower. It grew louder, and her strained ears caught the sound of a low wailing like the moans of one in mortal pain. She could not bear it, she could lie still no longer, she seized the lamp and made a tour of the apartment, examining every crook and cranny thereof. On one side was a closet, empty, with a trap door in the flooring; this she lifted and found a narrow flight of broken steps; these she descended, perhaps she could find her way out. The wailing grew louder as she descended, and a bitter wind swept up and chilled her to the marrow. Creeping through a low narrow archway at the foot of the stairs she found herself in an apartment the counter-

part of that she had just left, only it was loftier and had a groined roof. It was here the wind swirling in through iron gratings near the roof made the moaning that so distressed her. She held the light above her head and peered down into the gloom. The floor was covered with whitening bones crumbling to atoms, and from niches in the wall, grinning out from a mass of tumbling bones, were human skulls in different stages of dilapidation. With a cry of horror she turned and fled, realizing at once that this was a part of a ruined monastery where the monks had buried their dead centuries ago. She was keenly alive now to the horrors of the situation. Her brain reeled. She felt she was going mad! She must escape, she must. What had become of Watson? Had they murdered her, or had she fled? Mrs. Hawtreys clasped her little dog Fifiue tighter in her arms; it never struck her as strange that through all this time Fifiue had never uttered a sound. Everything was real and yet unreal. She saw herself clearly and distinctly lounging lazily in the verandah of the hotel with the sunshine of light and life and love around her. She had heard her Harry's voice distantly though as in a dream, but surely that must have been years ago. She wandered round the chamber despairingly, looked through the narrow slits which served for windows. It was high up, a long way from the ground, but she did not care if she killed herself. She would get away. She squeezed herself through the aperture, made a spring at the straggling branches of a tree that grew within a few feet of her window, and with some difficulty and great caution swung herself to the ground.

By this time the day was breaking, and she made her way—aimlessly, not knowing whither she was going—over the rough, uneven ground till she came in sight of a long, narrow building where a number of people were passing to and fro; thither she made her way—they might have been shadows, for they spoke no word that she could comprehend, but instinctively she felt they were kindly disposed—at any rate, there, among the many, she would be safe from the dreaded two.

Presently she became conscious of a great hubbub; a crowd gathered on one side, and in another moment the pale-faced man and the woman appeared in the midst, and came forward and accused her of having stolen the property she still carried in her hand, for she had never let go her leather bag. She shivered, covered her face, and with a despairing cry called on her husband's name. And, lo, he was there! His protecting arms were round her, and it was his voice—surely it was his voice that spoke. She lifted her head and looked round; the crowd, the pale-faced man and woman had disappeared. She was clasped to his breast; it was his anxious face that bent over her, his hand that smoothed her hair, his voice that comforted her.

"Amy, darling, don't be afraid; thank God, you are all right now."

"Yes; now," somewhat bewilderedly, trying to collect her thoughts; "but how did you find me? when did you bring me here?"

She looked round; she was in her own bed, and on one side was a grave-looking gentleman, whom she recognized as a certain Dr. Strauss.

"My darling Amy," he answered, "you have been in a dead faint; we have been hours trying to rouse you."

"How could you rouse me when I wasn't here?" she answered. "Oh, Harry," she added, as she clung to him, it was so sweet to find herself in his sheltering arms, "I'll never, never leave you again. I have had such a dreadful journey." She caught a look that passed between them. "I see what you are thinking, but I am not delirious, nor I have not been dreaming while I have been here seemingly asleep; my other self has been away." She gave an intensified description of all her spiritual part had seen and undergone while her body lay sleeping there. She would allow no discussion of the subject, as she firmly believed she had been allowed to have a foreshadowing, a somewhat distorted picture of some terrible evil that might be avoided, or would befall them under certain conditions, which conditions it lay in their own power to fulfil or not.

"You know, Harry, coming events sometimes cast their shadows before, though it is not given to us all to see them. Our spirit's eyes may sometimes be unsealed during sleep, and we have a glimpse of things which in our waking hours we are blind to. Of course I don't pretend to explain the how, the why and the wherefore, but then how little do we really understand of anything? How does a thought get into my brain? And why do the thoughts of some men work themselves out in such wonderful ways?"

"My dear lady," exclaimed the doctor in a purring pussy-cat voice; he evidently thought his patient had gone off her head, "pray compose yourself. What is the use of thinking of such strange things?"

She flounced angrily on her pillow, and answered impatiently:

"Oh, as for that, what is the use of anything? What is the use of you, or of me—indeed, what is the use of the whole universe?"

"Well, we are a part of it; if it were not for the creation of the universe, we could not live," he answered sapiently.

"And why *should* we live?" she inquired. Not being prepared with an answer—indeed, the question might have puzzled a wiser head than his—Dr. Strauss contended himself by saying:

"I think we should confine ourselves to things of this world,

which our minds are able to grasp, and not send our thoughts wandering through forbidden ways."

"You can confine your thoughts to pills and pill boxes, if you choose," she rejoined impatiently; "I shall let mine wander wherever they have a mind to. Now, please, go; your solemn face worries me."

Late on the following day the doctor called, expecting to find his patient in a brain fever; but lo! the birds had flown. Colonel Hawtrey and his wife had left Algiers by the morning train. Mrs. Hawtrey had impressed her husband with the necessity of leaving the city without an hour's delay. He had himself, it appeared, planned with Leonides a trip to Bjarzik, the place she believed herself to have visited in her dream; but his wife's illness of course put a stop to all such ideas. She was so strongly impressed with her night's experience that she was in a fever till they were off. The colonel readily acknowledged that his wife had a faculty which he did not possess, and often astonished him by her foreknowledge of things that came to pass, and though he could not comprehend whence came her powers of intuition, he generally adopted her views as he did now. She had argued her point till his wits were entangled and lost in the labyrinth of her spiritual philosophy.

"You see, Harry," she added in conclusion, "as the mirage presents a perfect reflexion of a city that is miles away—so perfect that travellers journey towards it, and the nearer they get the farther it seems away—why should not the evil thoughts or intentions of one mind find an outlet, and become reflected or shadowed forth as in a mental mirage, and become visible to some other most interested mind by some mesmeric or electrical process, and act as a deterrent, or warning?"

The colonel could not answer why not, so kept a discreet silence. As I have already said, they left Algiers at once; but they had not seen the last of the pale-faced man.

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The year following their trip to Algiers, the Hawtreys determined to join a party of friends and go on a yachting cruise to the Greek isles. They spent some time sailing in and about those fairy scenes, occasionally landing for a day or two; but spending the greater part of their time aboard their luxurious vessel, amusing themselves in the many ways that make the time pass pleasantly on ship board. In the evening it was their habit to gather on the deck, and indulge in desultory gossip or story-telling, each contributing his or her mite to the general amusement; but the novelty of this dreamy life after a time became monotonous, and even a pleasant monotony has generally a depressing effect, especially on women of an excitable nature, who, having few resources in themselves, look to the outer world for their pleasures

and amusements. Now although Colonel and Mrs. Hawtrey found the greatest enjoyment of their lives in themselves and in one another, it was not so with the rest of their party; though the gentlemen managed to kill time well enough, what with their smoking, their baccarat, and other masculine diversions. With the ladies, who neither smoked nor gambled, it was different; they had soon each travelled over the extent of the other's mind, and left no corner unexplored; they soon came to the end of it; they felt that they had talked over all they had to talk about, and conversation would be listless and dead for ever afterwards.

"Dear Mrs. Hawtrey," said pretty feather-headed Lady Bartley, "I quite envy you; you and your husband are always indulging in tender *tête-à-têtes*, and after all these years what can there be left for you to say?"

"Ah," answered the little lady briskly, "the more we are together the more we talk, the more we have to say; every day, every hour gives us fresh food for conversation."

"Ah, that's the puzzle," said Lady Bartley languidly. "Now George and I exhausted our exchequer, in the way of conversation, in the first week of our honeymoon; now, whenever we do indulge in a *tête-à-tête*, which is not often, thank God, it always ends in a quarrel."

"Poor George!" exclaimed Amy.

"I think it is poor *me*; men get along well enough; it is only we poor women that get bored. I am sure I shall die a premature death of pure *ennui*."

"And when you get to heaven you'll get tired of the archangels too."

"I shouldn't wonder, but that's for the sweet by-and-by; but I do wish something would happen to stir us up *now*, don't you?"

"At present I think any change would be for the worse," said Mrs. Hawtrey. "I'm content, I thoroughly enjoy this life—the sunsets and the moonlights, the exhilarating sea breezes and the delicious motion of the boat as she skims along like a gigantic sea bird. For my part, I think we're having a delightful time."

"Yours is a tame nature. I require stronger food; I can conceive few things of which I should tire sooner than of the life we are leading now; I should like to have lived in the days when there were pirates round to put a little romantic flavour into our lives."

"If a little brigandage would suit you as well, you might indulge your taste in that direction with little difficulty. There is always something of that kind going on in these latitudes. I shouldn't wonder if you might easily get carried off and sold to some great pasha as an additional attraction to his harem. That would be a change!"

"Too violent for my taste," answered the lady with a little *moue*.

But there came no change, either violent or otherwise. They floated hither and thither for a few days longer, then by common consent made their way to Athens. They found that city in a state of wild confusion and excitement.

The city and its environs had been free from all lawless molestation for so many years that all suspicions in that direction had been lulled into a false security, for only the day before the arrival of our yachting party, a gentleman had left the hotel for a ramble through the surrounding country and had not returned. His wife remained at the hotel in a state bordering on distraction. Lady Bartley vicariously enjoyed the adventure and strove to soothe and comfort the distressed lady with that equanimity with which we generally contemplate our friends' misfortunes. The matter in all its bearings was freely discussed among the various guests—in fact, they discussed little else and all watched eagerly for every scrap of news. Everybody felt it was their own particular concern, for what had happened to one might presently happen to another.

"I had a little shine with some embryo brigands in Cairo only last year," said Sir George Bartley, "and since then I have had rather a tender regard for the fraternity." A buzz of curious inquiries followed, and he continued: "Well, I'll tell you just how it was. I went out for a stroll in the twilight, and I had not got above a quarter of a mile from my hotel when I was knocked down by two men; one pinioned my arms, the other rifled my pockets. Now, they contained my pocket-book, which was full of valuable papers, my purse and chronometer watch, which had been presented to me when I left the 20th Hussars. For the money I didn't care a jot, for the watch and pocket-book I did. The affair occupied scarcely a moment: I had no time to think, but I picked myself up and ran after the thieves."

"Didn't you call for help?"

"No; I was too wary a bird for that," he answered. "My shouts would most likely have summoned help for *them*—not for *me*. I took to my legs on impulse; if I had reflected I should have let them go, for an unarmed man is no match for a pair of armed ruffians, to whom robbery and murder is an every-day trade—they might have turned on the moment and stabbed me to death, but they didn't. As I ran they faced about and one came towards me, holding out my watch and pocket-book, which with a polite bow he placed in my hand!* That is the end of it. Now I can't call a fellow like that a thief."

"What else? He stole your money."

"But returned what I valued more than money—things that mere money never could have replaced."

"The fellows they are after now are of quite a different species,"

* A fact.

observed one. "The rumour goes that they are the same gang who have been carrying on their villainous game in the country round about Algiers. The last was, I believe, a crime of special atrocity. They decoyed two American gentlemen to the remains of a dilapidated old monastery near Bjarzik, and there robbed and murdered them. No doubt the United States will take the matter up. They say that Algeria got too hot for them, so that they returned to Greece."

"Bjarzik!" repeated Mrs. Hawtreys, her bright colour paling as she spoke to her husband in a low voice. "Why, Harry, that was the very place I went to in my dream!"

"Why, yes, so it was," he answered.

"And it was that very place, too, you told me that dreadful man had suggested to you for your next excursion! There, don't talk of it, Harry; it makes me nervous to think of that. I am sure my dream was sent as a warning, and we had a narrow escape from something dreadful!"

The next day a rumour reached the city that some of the brigands had been caught, among them the chief of the band. They were on the way thither, and would reach Athens before nightfall.

It chanced to be a *fête* day, and towards the dusk of the evening, when the streets were thronged with a gaily-dressed multitude, streamers flying, music playing, a whisper ran like wildfire through the streets. The tramp of soldiers was heard; presently they came in sight with the captured brigands in their midst. The guests crowded out of the hotel and swarmed upon the balcony to watch the cavalcade pass by. A tall man in the centre of the group lifted his head and regarded them with a defiant scowl, which changed to as equally defiant a smile as he caught sight of the Hawtreys among the company of gazers, and he raised his manacled hands in the attempted mockery of a salute. Mrs. Hawtreys leaned forward; her face flushed crimson; she grasped her husband's arm tightly as she recognized in the captive brigand the pale-faced Leonides, who had roused her antipathy the year before! In due time he, with the rest of his gang, was tried, condemned and executed.

After this time Colonel Hawtreys observed his wife grew abstracted and absent-minded and inquired the cause.

"Well, Harry, I hardly like to tell you," she answered; "but the fact is—well, I should like to go to Bjarzik. I shall not rest till I have seen it. We have plenty of time and may as well go there as anywhere else."

Accordingly they headed the yacht towards Algiers, and duly landing they took a carriage for Bjarzik.

They travelled bodily, precisely, exactly as the lady had travelled, or *believed* she had travelled, spiritually the year before, along the same road, through the wide dreary waste lands, till they came to

the very scene of her strange dream! There was the desolate spot, exactly as she had described it, the ruined monastery, the heap of stones, the tower with—yes—there was actually a man and a woman (poor, harmless peasants they chanced to be in this case) standing in the low arched doorway!

This extraordinary coincidence set the colonel thinking. He did not believe in occult influences, and knew nothing of the mystic side of life, but he was silent; it is only the ignorant who laugh at things they don't understand. He was a sensible man and kept things in his heart and pondered over them.

He had small doubt *now* that the fascinating Leonides had intended to decoy both him and his wife to that lonely ruin for purposes of robbery or worse—a fate from which they had been saved by some occult agency beyond his comprehension.

DUCHESS FRANCES.

By SARAH TYTLER,

AUTHOR OF "CITOYENNE JACQUELINE," "SAINT MUNGO'S CITY," "LADY BELL," ETC.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ANGEL WITH THE DRAWN SWORD.

FRANCES did not forget her promise. At the same time the Hills stuck to their determination of on no account suffering Cherry Norton to cross the polluted threshold of Whitehall. The determination was not rendered less inflexible by the simple fact that the little girl was not provided either with clothes or attendance which could make her paying a visit to a cousin domiciled in a palace a fit proceeding. As the mountain would not go to Mahomet, Mahomet went to the mountain. Frances now and again went to the Hills', where there was no family obligation on her to go, at considerable personal sacrifice, since the City home of the impoverished merchant, with its crowd of poorly clad, poorly-fed children, was not at the best a cheerful dwelling, and she was constantly exposed to the fierce diatribes of the master of the house, with the depressing accompaniment of Mrs. Hill's peevish murmurs and complaints. Once or twice Frances succeeded in carrying off Cherry, with a child or two from whom she could not be rid, for a drive in a borrowed coach; or she got consent for the girl and the children to meet and walk with her, before any gay company were abroad, in Hyde Park. Then the children played about, and Frances and Cherry strolled or sat on a bench together, Cherry listening entranced to her companion's vivacious descriptions of the fairyland splendour of the court, its balls and banquets, games and gambols, while Frances was amused in turn by the quaint womanliness of Cherry's comments.

Sometimes the pair talked of Holywell, of Bab and little Sal, of nutting and blackberry-gathering in the lanes on the autumn afternoons, of making their way through hedge and thicket, and climbing the trees to see, unseen themselves, company go by, of playing "hide and seek" in the stack-yard under the rising moon. Frances would laugh with a greater abandonment than Cherry at these lingering recollections of Cherry's visit.

"Cousin," said Cherry, after a brief pause in one of those conversations, and as she spoke she fixed great, awed, rather than scared eyes on her lively, restless companion, who would always be plucking at the posy in her dress, or setting right one of the soft fair curls on her shoulders, or, if she could find nothing else to do, tickling Cherry's slightly-peaked chin with a blade of grass, "have you heard what people do say, that an angel with a sword half-drawn hath been seen in the sky over Westminster, and that when the plague which is come from Amsterdam and lighted at Greenwich, and now be broke out in Drury Lane, has fair hold of London, then the angel will draw his sword full and stretch it out from Westminster to the Tower, till the day of the Lord's vengeance is fulfilled?"

"Nonsense," said Frances quickly, "I don't believe a word of it. Uncle Hill is always denouncing his neighbours and calling down judgments on them. T'other day it was the blazing comet, and now it is this avenging angel. You did not see the angel, now did you, Cherry?" creeping nearer to her companion.

"No, I did not," admitted Cherry candidly, "but I did see a closed house with a red cross on the door, and the words writ beneath, 'Lord have mercy upon us.' And do you know, Cousin Frances, if Uncle Hill is good at denouncing, as you say, he do also pray powerfully for the poor sick people. Sure that is right and acceptable in the sight of God, though it may be wrong—I know not—to hold dancing to be a grievous sin, and to believe that a judgment will descend on this country because of the on-goings in the great houses and the riots in the village inns, which were once put down with a high hand."

"And a pretty doleful nation we were then, as I have heard say," declared Frances, "and not by a long way so innocent a one as your Baptists and Anabaptists would have people persuaded. Why, what harm was it to dress a May-pole with flowers and caper round it, ay, or to roast an ox and drink a stoup of wine or a can of ale to the king's health? It was sometimes the only capering the lads and lasses had in the course of the year; and the starving goodies and gaffers were all the better for the broken meat that was left of the ox, and the dregs of the stoups and cans. Why, the Puritans grudged the poor bodies and the rest of the world good cheer even at Christmas. Thou wouldst not agree with them there?"

"No," said Cherry, with her youthful sedateness, "but I would not have people capering the one moment and cursing and fighting the next; and I would not have them starving at all, but happy and thankful, with enough to eat the whole year round."

"Oh, but they could not be so unreasonable as to expect that," remarked Frances carelessly; "that would be too good for this world. And about the unfortunate plague-stricken wretches; the

weather is hot, and there is bound to be sickness, but I do reckon the most of it is clean fright. What are doctors good for if they can't discover a cure for a bout of fever, a sore throat and a spot or two under the arm or elsewhere on the body? It ain't as if it were the smallpox, or falling sickness, or a tympany or a horn like a cow's growing out of the head. Then I would not ask them to do impossibles. But what hindereth them to get the better of a sore throat little worse than a thrush to begin with? It is my humble opinion it is half fudge, and the doctors themselves are making all this noise to fright people, get patients, and magnify their leech-craft when they choose to practise it."

"But they would not let the people die," remonstrated Cherry. "I am not very wise, as Uncle and Aunt Hill are constantly telling me for my good; I cannot speak like those who know better, yet the doctors die themselves of the disease in token of their sincerity. Methinks, cousin, it is taking too much upon ourselves that are weak, frail, and helpless in every great calamity to pretend that we ought to be able to master the plague because it is no worse to begin with than a dizziness, a smarting and swelling at the back of the tongue, and a rising and discolouring of a flesh lump, when we know all the time that God Almighty deals with small things as well as with great, and can make the least no less than the biggest the instruments of His wrath or His mercy."

"You're getting infected with the talk of the Hills' house," protested Frances, shaking her head with its plumed hat; "soon you'll be a great deal too good for keeping me company; I won't say I'll be sorry then, for I must tell you if there is a thing I cannot abide, it is a saint."

"Oh! what have I done," cried Cherry in dismay, "that you should think I set myself up to find fault with you—you who are so good and kind, who have so much, are such a fine lady and yet can find the time and the will to seek me out and notice me? That you should think I am seeking to impose on you as a saint; me, who am only a silly, stupid girl with a sulky temper—till I tempt you to cast scorn on the real saints who are to possess the earth and rule the world?"

"Never mind," said Frances, mollified by Cherry's distress, "I dare swear you belong to them, and I for one will not object to your reign. I'll come bound you have not a sulky temper; sure that is one of Aunt Hill's cross speeches. You're only too submissive, and too much of a patient Grizel little wench. If I were in Speedwell Lane shouldn't I smack the small fry right and left, and give a bit of my mind to their worshipful elders?"

"No, no," cried Cherry with conviction, "not when they gave you all you had, sharing the little that was left to them with you. Never."

"Well, well; have it any way you like," said Frances with airy indifference, "I'll not quarrel with you. As for this plague, even at the worst nobody pretends it is more deadly than it were in King James's time, and men are all these years the wiser than their grandfathers to cope with the pest. Thou wilt see it will go as it has come, and we'll soon hear no more on't."

But as a matter of fact though the plague did go as it came and men heard no more of it and soon forgot in the hurry of life, with all its passing interests and occupations, the awful, paralyzing visitation, the visitor did not depart before it had reached a greater height than the ravages of any pestilence before or since spread desolation in England. Every house in whole streets bore the fatal red cross, and the piteous appeal to the pity of heaven for the misery of earth. The dismal cry, "Bring out your dead," accompanied the rumbling of the dead-carts, broke in on the silence of night and awoke the slumbering echoes in the once crowded and noisy thoroughfares. Uncoffined corpses were hurled in heaps into pits, opened for the purpose in Bunhill Fields. Two women were met weeping, staggering under the burden of a man in his coffin; other coffins with their tenants lay out forsaken in waste places. From six to eight thousand persons died in London of the horrible disease in one week, while at least a hundred thousand persons perished in England. Such of the population as could flee for their lives deserted the stricken city, and grass began to grow in its markets and exchanges.

At an early stage of the calamity the court removed to Hampton Court, while the plague followed like Hans Holbein's grinning skeleton Death, on the swaggering, tripping heels of grooms-of-the-chamber and maids-of-honour.

The next move was to the sweet fresh air of Salisbury, as yet uncontaminated, and so unsubdued was the spirit of both travellers and spectators, gathered to witness the departure, that Mr. Samuel Pepys, who was of course well to the front, could remark with a little spurt of enthusiasm, "But it was pretty to see the young pretty ladies dressed like men, in velvet coats, caps with ribands just like men's." At another page of the wonderful diary he bewailed "the trailing petticoats" as the only detail which marred the masculine attire. It was, in fact, the first version of the modern riding-habit in which the rivals of little, fair, fresh, splendidly healthy young Frances must have found it hard to distance her by their most languishing or most stately airs. At the same time she had been forced to unsay her words in retreating before the ghastly foe, though it is doubtful whether, if left to herself, she would not sooner have faced him and bidden him do his worst than yielded an inch of ground to his terrors; she succeeded in seeing Cherry Norton again both before Frances went with the others to Hampton Court and after she returned from Salisbury in the train of her mistress,

the Duchess of York, on their way to join the Duke at York.

On the first occasion the meeting was at the head of Speedwell Lane, to which Frances had summoned her little gossip, the maid-of-honour being on horseback in company with several ladies and gentlemen and a few attendants in the ducal liveries. The party had been forced to come into the City upon a ducal errand, and were making their way westward again as fast as possible. They had only consented to ride slowly for ten minutes or so, till a volatile, self-willed young lady inquired in the most perfunctory manner after the welfare of an uncle and aunt with their household, and then cantered on and rejoined the others.

Cherry looked quite well in the midst of the prevailing sickness, and in spite of the stench of the expiring embers of the tar-barrel which was burned nightly, to hide other stenches, at the street corner to the delight of all the remaining rabble of the district. She looked more than well; she had a pleased, proud, important air. "Cousin," she said, "I won't keep you a minute, but I've great news for you: I'm to be left in charge—think of that, Cousin Frances! not only of the house, but of Uncle Hill, while Aunt Hill goes with the children to his sister Whittaker's at Islington."

"But she is not going to leave a child like you alone here?" cried Frances, reining up her pony with a jerk, so that it began to prance a little.

"Cousin Frances, Cousin Frances, take care," shrieked Cherry, for she was not accustomed to horses and their ways. "Oh! will you not light and let me hold her till she is quiet?" and in spite of her face, white and quivering with fright, she would have stepped forward and caught the bridle.

"Let alone, Cherry, and stand back. I can take care of myself, be thankful. Dost think I want a little cockaigne lass, who hath not been three times mounted in her life, to guide my pony? Why, what a conceit thou must have of thyself!"

Cherry hung her head. "I don't think it was that," she said humbly, "but it did seem that if aught happened, it would be of less moment if it were to me than to you."

"Nothing is going to happen, you goose; but I do say it is monstrous of Aunt Hill to go away at such a time and leave you here."

"She says she can trust me," explained Cherry, drawing herself up with a little innocent satisfaction. "She could not be easy in her mind to go away and nobody left to look after Uncle Hill, who cannot go because of the business; though, between you and me, cousin, the business was at a standstill long before the plague came, but perchance it is all the worse to leave it so," she ended simply.

"It is monstrous to leave you," repeated Frances indignantly. "I could that my father and sister Bab were here; not that I would wish them to run any risk, neither. How can Uncle Hill allow it?"

"He is not very agreeable to the arrangement," owned the juvenile *châtelaine* reluctantly. "He says it is too much responsibility for one so young. I might get a scare and fall sick on his hands, and what would he do then? He would much rather manage for himself, but that isn't to be thought of for a moment; Aunt Hill would lose all the good of the change and the country air. Uncle Hill would forget to take his meals, or he would read all the time he ate, and so get no good of his food. Then *he* would fall ill, though not of the plague. It is all right, indeed, indeed it is, cousin."

"No, it is all wrong," said Frances gloomily, biting the handle of her whip.

"I'm vexed I broached the matter if you are to fret about it," went on Cherry regretfully. "It was my pride, as you say. But why should you all make such an ado? I shan't get a scare; I'm used to sick people, Cousin Peter and Aunt Hill, and Uncle Hill when he has the rheum. I've helped to nurse them, though I could not do them so much good as I wished. And this summer, when I was going Aunt Hill's errands, I've passed scores of people sick with the plague in chairs and coaches so long as the magistrates and the doctors would let them be lifted to be taken to their own parishes and homes. I have seen the poor creatures who were recovering sitting with plaisters on their sores begging in the streets, shunned by all. And do you know," Cherry proceeded, with a mixture of awe and excitement in her voice, "when I had to go again to Master Gomfrey's for a powder for Peter and was kept late as before, me and Will came up with one of the earlier dead carts, and we had to walk after it, we could not help ourselves, and see the bodies carried out. But they did me and Will no harm, poor dead bodies! we were none the worse. I shan't fall sick, I'm strong. If I were to feel it coming on," added the little girl half dreamily, half wearily, "methinks I'd just creep away out of the road and not trouble Uncle Hill or anybody, and there would be an end of me here and little fuss—why should there be? for I would be gone out of people's way, to a better world," finished Cherry with the strangest, most pathetically unchildlike resignation.

"I cannot stop another minute," said Frances hurriedly. "I see they're turning back for me, and we were forbidden to tarry, while they only took the last turn to oblige me. But I'll come back; I'll tell her Grace; she hath a good heart and is no coward, she'll give me leave for a month. I shan't go to Hampton Court. Sooner than you should bide alone—for Uncle Hill must be absent often—not that his presence is a great comfort—in that great

dreary hole by yourself, a little wench like you, no older than sister Bab, I'll come and bide with you and be denounced and doomed every hour of the twelve; I don't mind being denounced and I don't mind the plague."

"That would never do," protested Cherry energetically. "If any ill happened to you, who are so beautiful and happy and much thought of, like a princess yourself in the palace, your friends down at Holywell, who were kind to me, would never forgive me; I would never, never forgive myself. What have I said to egg you on to make this offer, which is just like you? I'll do very well, Cousin Frances; I'm not to be left all by myself—did I lead you on to think so? Nay, then I misled you without meaning it. Will Curl's mother is to sleep in the house, and I can have her whenever I want her. Master Whittaker is to look in when he is in town, and see how Uncle Hill and me get on. There, go, go, cousin, to thy friends, and do not waste another thought on me."

Frances had to go clattering over the uneven stones, shaking her head discontentedly, though she was somewhat reassured by what she had been told of Will Curl's mother and Master Whittaker as available allies. On second thoughts she was aware that it would not be practicable for her to join the girl in their uncle's house in Speedwell Lane, and rejoin the court: much licence was permitted, but not of this kind. Madam Jennings would be bitterly incensed by any collapse of Frances's court favour, and in truth Frances herself would be loth to imperil it. She had a high courage of a purely worldly kind, but she was totally destitute of the heroic self-sacrificing spirit and the long-suffering faith of Cherry Norton. When it came to the point Frances was not sorry that her offer must fall to the ground. She did not relish penance, and it would have been no slight penance for her to spend a month, nay a week, in her uncle's house, even with the Duchess's full permission, and a return to court at the end of the visit to the City.

But to show that Frances did not forget the girl who had done her a service, whom she had promised to befriend, and who, though she might favour Bab as Frances fancied, was certainly very unlike herself, the young maid-of-honour wrote once and again to her cousin's cousin from Hampton Court and Salisbury. It did not matter so far as her writing was concerned, that she could have no answer to her letter, since she dared not run the risk of having a reply sent to her by any of the carriers who still travelled on the roads from the City to the sojourn of the court. As for the King's and the Duke's messengers they had more important business on hand than to carry girls' letters.

But Frances must have an assurance whether poor little Cherry were alive or dead before she, Frances, had the heart to start on her travels. For the expedition to York, which she was about to

undertake in royal company, was nearly as remote and precarious for a young woman to make at that date, as a visit to Lapland or a sojourn in Siberia would be in the present generation. York itself was all very well, a highly-civilized town, with a cathedral, a castle, and above all a garrison; but the roads and rivers, the moors and marshes which lay between, and the company that might be met! True Frances travelled with great company and shared their exemptions and privileges. No chance of inns being found too full for the Duchess of York and her suite. The country houses, castles, courts and manors far and near, whatever shade of politics their owners might profess, were at her service. No chance of horses failing her even if her leaders fell lame or her next relay broke down. No need for alarm where footpads were concerned when so many gentlemen with their servants rode on in front of the coaches, or formed their rear-guard. But granted all these advantages, great company had also its disadvantages. People's memories were sometimes inconveniently long. Royalty had not been treated with great respect in the previous generation. What had become of all the fierce Fifth Monarchy men, the gloomy followers of Vane, the writers of such tracts as "Slaying no murder"? They might have been driven into holes and corners, hunted and shot down, hanged and quartered, but they could hardly have been utterly extirpated. They must be hard up and desperate. What would suit them better than to waylay the daughter of the treacherous, malignant Clarendon, the wife of the tool of the Scarlet Woman James Stewart, and send her and her flaunting minions where better people had gone before them, while their pomps and luxuries became the spoil of God's people?

It was the month of August, when the air in London was heaviest and foulest, and the number of plague victims had reached its climax. But along with the realization of what the disease could do had come the comparative familiarity which hardens to danger, even when it does not breed contempt. Somebody had to do the necessary work of life even when there was risk in doing it. Sundry possessions of the Duchess of York and her ladies, which could not well be intrusted to servants, were wanted from St. James's and Whitehall, for the journey to the north. Frances Jennings volunteered to go to town with a trusty lady-of-the-bedchamber of mature years, and get what was required, the two ladies being hedged about with medical precautions and furnished with a guard of servants.

Where was the use of writing more letters to which she could receive no answer? One afternoon Frances took the daring and not particularly straightforward resolution of paying a private visit to the City, no less than to Whitehall. She would keep it a secret from her duenna, neither would she admit the world into her confidence. She would wear one of the masks which ladies

far more proper and prudish than Mrs. Jennings had ever shown herself, put on when they went incognito to amuse themselves in the mixed company in Spring Gardens or in Hyde Park. She would take boat from the palace stairs to that one of the City stairs which was nearest Speedwell Lane, from which she and Mrs. Henrietta Maria Price had been rowed on the eventful evening when they played at being orange girls. Barges were reckoned less liable to carry infection than hackney coaches, therefore a barge was preferable on this occasion. And when she had landed she would run along to her Uncle Hill's, where she had made an appointment with Cherry in one of the letters to which there could come no answer. Frances would see for herself whether Cherry were alive or dead. If the former, as the visitor was fain to hope, the lady in the mask, though Frances had bidden Cherry expect her cousin, might have the satisfaction of beginning by mystifying the little girl. It has been already said that all through her life Frances had an innate, apparently ineradicable, taste for mystifications, disguises and secrets. However, her present stratagem was soon arrested and brought to a conclusion. She had only got as far as the Water-gate in the fulfilment of her intention, when she found herself anticipated. A small boat rowed by two lads, and containing in addition to them one hooded little figure, was being paddled about, a yard or two from the steps. The moment Frances appeared, though she had on her mask and was wrapped in a loose cloak, which further concealed her dainty person, the other small figure started up causing the boat to rock perilously, but she was so intent on what she had to do that she did not seem to mind the rocking. "Cousin, don't come any nearer," called a sweet treble voice. "There is a case of the plague in our lane. I am here to warn you; I thought you would take this way; you must not venture to the City. Will Curl here and his brother have rowed me up, and we must get back with the tide, else Uncle Hill and Will's mother, who do not know where we are, will miss us and be concerned about us. Take care of yourself, kind cousin, and don't trouble about me. I'm all right. Good-bye and God speed you; give you a pleasant journey and a happy life, with a peaceful ending, and an entrance into a better world beyond death."

"Oh! me, Cherry, why do you say all that as if we were never to meet again?" cried Frances in a lamentable voice—for her.

"No, no, cousin, I did not mean that," protested the little woman, and she made a sign to her rowers to tarry a minute longer. "Didst not hear me say I was well and so is Uncle Hill, and we have good tidings from my aunt and the children at Islington? God hath a care of us all wherever we be; only, as Uncle Hill says, it is well to be prepared, for one never knows; so I say not only good-bye, but God bless you, dear Cousin Frances, both now and always. Yes, we'll meet again, never fear, some

day. Even if the one were to lose the other here, and the one were but an insignificant, foolish maid of tender years, still eternity is too long for us to miss each other in."

Cherry was looking up to Frances where she stood on the stairs, and as the young girl threw back her head, her hood fell off and exposed her short, clustering curls and innocent, soft face, lit up with such a sweet pure light, like that of the moonbeams, as Frances had never before beheld on a human face.

"That is not true," called down Frances—she spoke sharply, with a momentary pain in her voice. "Thou art far better and wiser than me, though the fools of men who pretend to be my 'servants' cry up my wit. I don't know anybody a bit like thee except Bab, whom God keep safe for our father's sake, down at St. Albans. Cherry, Cherry, I can't part with you like this, and the plague at your very door! Bid your rowers put you out and I'll contrive somehow to get you sent away from London into safer quarters before I go north."

"What! Desert Uncle Hill and Mrs. Curl, and betray the trust Aunt Hill put in me?" cried Cherry in tones of reproach amounting to horror. "I could not do that even for you. That would be to expose myself to worse than death in order to escape death—a bad bargain. And I must not even die unless God will it, and if He will it what could save me, though I were with the court at Salisbury or with you at York?"

"I told you that you were smitten with what goes on in yonder house." It was Frances's turn to reproach the rejector of her proposal gloomily, though, to do Mrs. Jennings justice, there was more of sadness in the gloom than of the anger with which she generally met any opposition to her will. This moderation might be partly due to a rising consciousness on her part that in accordance with a custom of hers, she had spoken faster than she had any warrant to speak. If Cherry had taken her at her word Frances would have been at a loss to keep it, unless one of those obsequious servants of hers—Dick Talbot or another—had started up conveniently on the spot and at the instant, and she had commanded him on the pain of her perpetual displeasure to provide a fit refuge and a sure escort for Cherry. And there would have been objections to that course also.

But Frances was not going to hint at this halt in her purpose. She only repeated: "Yes, that is it; you are smitten, child; though I trow it is only the good part of their dismal doctrines that sticks to you. And I was going to bring you such a big bottle of plague water," continued Frances, taking it out from under her cloak and holding it up in further protest. "It hath been in such request lately that the doctors cannot make it fast enough, even people of the first quality cannot always procure a little phial full, and you will not let me get within arm's length of you, that you may take it."

"Thank you, thank you, cousin, with all my heart," said Cherry gratefully. "I shall be so pleased to have it, for more than myself. Sure, Mrs. Curl's sister and Master Whittaker have been nigh distraught since they came down the lane this morning or ever they were aware of the shut-up house with the red cross on the door. They do want comfort. Prithee, Cousin Frances, put the bottle down on the steps and retreat within the gate, if you will, where you can wait and spy us coming back to fetch it, before anybody else knows such a cordial is going a begging. Uncle Hill did read of the plague-stricken in country places, that charitable souls carry them food and drink and put down the plates and porringers on window-sills, or walls, or rocks on the moors that the sick and those who wait on them may not run the risk of starvation. It will be like to them. Or," went on Cherry, her really vivid imagination taking a farther flight and her eyes sparkling with animation, "Will Curl here may represent some sworn champion of an imprisoned princess who is defying the enchanter that hath beguiled her into his castle, or the dragon that hath got her into his den."

In spite of her old-fashionedness and helpfulness, Cherry Norton was in some respects very young for her years—a whole lifetime younger than Bab down at Holywell. She made her excursion into fairyland with a swift change of mood and a sudden glee suggestive of youth. A peal of silvery laughter burst unexpectedly from her rosy lips, and the lads in the boat, who only half followed the allusion, felt it incumbent on them to grin broadly in order to bear their little mistress company.

The other girl, who was not so much older than Cherry in years, while Frances knew so very much more—so much she would have been better not to have known—of the sorrier side of life under its gorgeous gilding, put her veto on such childishness.

"Nonsense," she said in her smart, glib matter-of-factness. "I wonder to hear you, Cherry. Of course there are no such persons or animals neither as enchanters or dragons. And for princesses, they are very much the same as other people—not so good often," and Frances bridled with her beautiful throat and simpered behind her mask.

Cherry had sobered down again as fast as she had brightened up, not so much because of Frances's speech as in recalling the circumstances which surrounded her. She instinctively folded her small hands and shook her hooded head till the hood dropped half over her face.

"It is not for nought that Uncle Hill cries out against light-mindedness. It would be more beseeeming, if it were not over presumptuous, to compare the Thames to the brook Cherith, and the frightened forlorn citizens to the great prophet Elijah, and

you, cousin, to one of the ravens who were sent to fetch him bread and meat."

"Lord! Cherry, it is not over polite to even me to a raven," protested Frances indignantly. "If it were you yourself, now, in that dangling hood, you might be made to match with a hooded crow. That were not so far amiss."

"Don't laugh, Cousin Frances," said Cherry solemnly, shocked as at a piece of profanity. But she could not resist the pretty piece of play which Frances made of the proceeding. She withdrew and hid herself, and peeped out with her masked face to watch the performance of the boat's being pulled up close to the stair and the bottle of plague water snatched from the step, as if it had been a merry game and no deadly sickness in the land. Thus the cousins parted.

CHAPTER VIII.

GOLIATH AND DAVID.

FRANCES entered with the greatest zest on her travels. She had all the keen curiosity and lively interest of a vivacious spirit which has seen little or nothing of the world beyond the court end of London and a little corner of Hertfordshire, not to speak of a Kent or a Surrey watering-place, or of a brief flight into Wiltshire.

The expedition to York meant many days' travel in a cavalcade of coaches and waggons with a retinue of horsemen, every gentleman and his servant wearing swords by their sides and pistols in their holsters. The road, even though it was one of the main roads to the north, was rough enough at many points. It ran between country fields where the harvest work was going on, in spite of the plague, but came to a standstill that sturdy yeomen and brown reapers might gape and stare and hurrah at the sight of the fine company. Rude villages were left behind, and so were trim market towns with their authorities hurrying to do honour to royalty, though it did not come in the sacred person of either King or Queen, but only in the personable enough guise of Hyde, the Chancellor's daughter, who had succeeded in marrying the Duke of York. Well, well, every dog hath its day; it was her day, and she was mighty clever in queening it and in holding out a plump white hand to be kissed, though some of the country gentlemen who came trooping up bethought them of their fathers who had fallen at Worcester, or Newbury, or Copredy Bridge, with little regard had at this time of day, for their bloody deaths and loss of worldly goods, for church and king. These old Cavaliers would not have thought twice of walking into a room before her Grace's father, or of causing him

to stand waiting while they paid their suit to Rupert, or had their word with Newcastle or Derby.

When every day had carried with it as much fatigue as it could conveniently hold, there was the stoppage for the night at the inn or the country house selected for the honour. Then followed the ceremonious entrance heralded by obsequious landlord and landlady, or deferential host and hostess, through rows of servants, or files of the junior members of the family and groups of all the simple folk, who had rushed to look at what—a stately duchess or a fair maid-of-honour? What came next was less dignified but more diverting—the examining into the extemporised accommodation, with the fun to be got out of its make-shifts and failures, by a light heart and a witty tongue.

The meals were shorn of much of their usual forms and ceremonies and accompanied by grotesque substitutes for state chairs, daises, canopies, silver plate, while the public still looked on duly impressed by the ridiculous travesty, which Frances alleged would have made a horse laugh. What did it matter when appetites had never been better or laughter more easily provoked? it all came under the head of the day's enjoyment, to Frances at least.

Ample provision was made for amusement, about which people were peculiarly solicitous in that generation, as if to make up for the spell of enforced strictness under the Puritans, or as if men and women feared to allow themselves five minutes' leisure to think. It was not that the Duchess required to be constantly tickled, or could not employ herself rationally—witness her commendable attempt to write the Duke's memoirs from his journals, in order to present him in a more favourable light than surrounded him to the people whom he would one day be called upon to govern. But "Hyde's daughter" was far too shrewd a woman to run counter to the temper of the time in her dealings with the public. Besides, who knew but that the absence of frivolity might be counted a sign of her plebeian origin, to which she was sensitive, after the illustrious examples given in that reign of gamblers and dancers, hunters of moths and builders of card-houses?

The Duchess was punctilious in keeping up an atmosphere of gaiety, however tired she might be of it, as well as of her journey. It was not a question of private taste with her any longer, she was a public personage, bound to provide her satellites with what they craved for. She gave receptions to such provincial company as chose to wait upon her, at appropriate intervals of so-called rest. Even in her household circle, which she carried about with her, card-tables were set out nightly as a matter of course, verses were spouted, town songs were sung. The patter of the child's game, "I love my love," with all the letters of the alphabet, which, after all, is said to have had a political signification, was not forgotten. Dancing was indulged in when there was space for

dancing. None of the so-called refinements and solaces of life were omitted by those who were there to entertain and to be entertained until, since it was a case of *noblesse oblige*, the actors, from the greatest to the least, were ready to sink with exhaustion.

The energies of sixteen are not easily exhausted, especially when they are employed in the chase after novelty and pleasure. And Frances was the life of the party, though its head, the Duchess, was no inferior travelling companion. She was clever and *spirituelle*, and possessed an admirable faculty which many clever people cannot claim—she “had such a discernment of merit that she always distinguished it in another.” She found out and brought to light the best that was in her neighbour, unless that neighbour happened to be the Duchess’s enemy; for Anne Hyde or Anne Stewart, so generous and friendly to her friends, so forbearing to her little court, was “a bad enemy.” She had been carefully brought up, was well informed and had seen the world, both in the Low Countries and in France, when she herself was no more than a maid-of-honour, required to have her wits about her and to be complacent and agreeable to her mistress and her fellow-servants. She had served a valuable apprenticeship, the fruits of which were visible. She might carry it with rather too high a hand on her promotion, maintain too great state, incur the charges of pride and extravagance in the ordering of her household, but she was a woman “of parts,” according to the old phrase; she could not fail to be an intelligent leader. It belonged to her duty in the station to which she was called to show a carriage and conversation worthy of it; and it belonged no less to the carriage and conversation to improve the occasion by taking the principal advantages of travel and extending them to her retainers. It was not the Duchess of York’s fault, it was a result of the low standard of the time, that her young maids-of-honour, to whom she was a good mistress, were not as sensible as they were lively. She would have had them study the landscape, note the agricultural features of the different counties, investigate the trade products of the towns, recall the historical episodes in connection with this or that river or moor or castle. But these young women and their squires were not to be future queens and kings, and if the rising generation decline to be wise their diplomatic guardians have no resource save to leave them to their folly. If the guardians are very diplomatic they will even stoop to be amused by the folly and to appear to join in it. Thus Frances’ nimble, flippant tongue had free scope and her wild sallies were the most popular of all—more popular, her Grace was fain to admit to herself with a little grimace and a dry smile, than her sagest speeches.

Arrived at York, there was an extensive field for enjoyment without the drawbacks, make light of them as you will, of travelling

fatigues and inconveniences. The party were well, even sumptuously lodged. The dignitaries of the cathedral—to which, by-the-by, the Duchess alone made several visits—the magnates of the country round flocked to pay their respects to the Duke and Duchess, who were, so far as people could judge, their future sovereigns. The Duke, who had as great an ambition to be a general as to be an admiral, though he was without qualification for the former office, gave great attention to the military men in the castle and town, had them out, reviewed them after a system of his own, feasted them and was feasted by them. He sought to get on good terms with both gentle and simple, ill-suited as he was to play a popular part. He entered largely into north country sports and games in accordance with the season of the year. There were coursing matches and hawking matches, games of bowls and tennis, with card-playing and dancing to fill up the intervals.

The ladies assisted at the coursing and hawking, looked on at the bowls and the tennis, while as for the dancing, it could not go on without fair partners. Altogether, Mrs. Jennings had a very good and gay time of it. It was a matter of course that Frances, who had so many “servants” always at her command, should carry a few with her just to keep her hand in where the business of ordering about these troublesome appendages, teasing and tyrannising over them and preventing them from falling foul of each other was in question. It was also natural that she should add to the number a phalanx of smitten Yorkshire men, mighty representatives of a sagacious and stalwart race, early “quality” specimens of John Browdies, the product of oat-cakes and puddings, of the flocks of sheep on the moors and the herds of beeves in the dales.

But not a slow and sure gigantic Yorkshire man among them was bigger than Dick Talbot, or half so swaggering. In his capacity of groom-of-the-chamber he was in attendance on the Duchess and in constant association with his mistress Frances throughout the expedition. When one thinks of his forty thousand a year, his magnificent person, his prime of manhood, the support lent to his suit by the Duchess—which, by the way, casts a painful reflection on the desperate worldly-mindedness of that estimable princess—one is driven to wonder why he did not succeed. His bounce, his tendency to foam at the mouth when crossed, would simply be a piquant challenge and recommendation to which she could respond in kind, in the eyes of a little spitfire like Frances. As for his vices, in that vicious age, alas! alas! if they did not deter the Duchess from being his friend, they were not likely to make much impression on an ignorant, volatile young girl. One is driven to wonder why the fierce siege which he was laying to her hand and heart was not then and there triumphant.

It was from no lack of ardour on Dick Talbot's part; he was as much in love and as fain to yield even his masterful furious humours to his mistress's fantastic whims as ever.

But Frances was still in other toils. The mingled vanity and ambition which had caused her to listen willingly to the suit of the court Lothario, Harry Jermyn, still swayed her. Bitten by the mad desire to be proclaimed the proud conqueror of one who was reputed to have conquered so many of her fellow women and then to have turned on his heel and left them, she could not give up the prospect. It would be a sweet revenge for her own wrongs, too, to change the polished savage into a tame and harmless husband of her high mightiness, coming at her beck and call, hanging on a word, a smile from his own wife.

Unfortunately there was no immediate likelihood of this edifying transformation. Harry Jermyn's supercilious lukewarmness as a lover, his careless dilatoriness in pressing the wooing, which he had good reason to hope would be successful, remained as before the canker in Frances's rose, the torture, and at the same time the main excitement of her life. No doubt it mortified her girlish folly intensely; no doubt it spoilt all the pleasure and what profit was going in that grand visit to York, yet it exercised a potent charm and unique fascination over the girl who was accustomed to regard her servants as her slaves. It had the harrowing uncertainty which is the real spell of all gambling, it presented a rousing contrast to the rest of her experience in the constant cool defiance it offered to her will and to the goodly gifts which in *La Belle Jennings* were so irresistible to all the other men in her circle. The end was that Harry Jermyn's absence, for he was not with the party at York, and real or feigned indifference were more powerful pleaders than Dick Talbot's presence and his devouring passion. There is no limit to the perversity of women, absence simply made the wilful heart grow fonder, as it will under very different circumstances. The last and worst fact that Jermyn's absence was voluntary and uncalled for, little short of insulting in its deliberate attempt to flaunt his freedom in the faces of the deeply-interested mocking court gossips, did not serve at this time to destroy his influence over Frances. It was a refined barbarity, a piece of detestable conceit and coxcombry where the young girl's most sensitive feelings were concerned, yet for a space it merely served to rivet her chains the faster.

Frances Jennings' weakness, or what many people chose to call the fitting punishment of her youthful arrogance, was a fine story for her scandal-loving companions. She was not any more beloved by them because, in addition to her supremacy in other respects, she preserved in her green youth, in the middle of her reckless pranks, a spotless reputation, and retained with all her grave faults some candour and generosity of soul.

But there was one friend to whom the amusement and ridicule excited at Frances's expense made no agreeable morsel, but a poisoned draught, which stung and stabbed, galled and goaded him well-nigh beyond endurance. This was Dick Talbot. Yet the ruffling bully tried to be gentle with his infatuated mistress, with whom another man was playing fast and loose while he held her up to public derision. Dick only insinuated his own superior merits and the contemptible deficiencies of his rival in the meekest manner—for him.

One autumn day*, when the two happened to be alone together in the Duchess of York's reception-room, Dick ventured to show his lady-love some verses which the incorrigible scribbler Rochester had written on the situation—verses which, without question, were going the round of the little court, stimulating the less accustomed Yorkshire palates, strange to the attic salt of such jeering rhymes. They dealt smartly with Frances's halting attitude between her ardent and her languid lover, and likened the two swains in their well-known personal peculiarities to Goliath and David. Upon the whole it was a thick-witted experiment for Dick Talbot to try. He ought to have been aware that one of the principal causes of Frances's wholesale adoption of the damaged cause of Mrs. Henrietta Maria Price, was the petty persecution inflicted on that sorry martyr by Rochester's verses, which have perished in smoke long generations ago. Why, it was on the very point of Frances's imprudent championship of the lampooned lady, that Dick and Frances had quarrelled violently, just at the moment when, according to his own rueful summing up, he was getting on famously, and carrying all before him in the first and last love affair which lay very near to his heart. However, Frances did not refuse to listen to him on this occasion. Presumably like a considerable portion of her sex, she would rather hear railing accusations brought against the man of whom her fancy was full, or have malicious fun poked at him, than not hear of him at all. She permitted herself to be diverted, for she had a very sprightly humour and a keen sense of the ridiculous, while the analogy was undeniably good, and the mere nicknames pat.

But just when Dick was beginning to strut about and plume himself on the wisdom of his deed, a swift reaction seized her. All that was best in the woman's nature reverted to the side of the absent lover. Was he not being assailed in a dastardly fashion behind his back with pin pricks of light laughter and unworthy mockery? Was he not being taunted with personal peculiarities which were none of his doing, which as they were beyond concealment he had never sought to hide?

Frances was full of remorse at having joined in the unhandsome

* Grammont.

game. Harry Jermyn was not there to defend himself; had he been there he would soon have silenced his large-limbed, wooden-headed adversary. If Harry was small in stature he was great in wit, which was far more to the purpose. And there was one who though she had been tempted into momentary disloyalty would stand by him and assert his superiority to all his stupid, miserably mean detractors.

She cried out, not in anger, but in what was far worse for poor Goliath, hanging his head and grinding his strong teeth, as he listened to her. Her voice was full of the wistful tenderness which could prize and make much of which other people dared to deride. "Ah! poor little David," was all she said, but it was enough.

Nevertheless Goliath had his victory, though not the one for which he longed, and that at no distant day. When the Duke and Duchess of York returned to St. James's after the plague was gone, or only smouldering in the poverty-stricken, filthy dens of the City, waiting to break out again the next summer, the first news that met the travellers was that Harry Jermyn was going with the expedition under Prince Rupert to join Captain Holmes's fleet off Guinea.

The tidings would have been such a blow as many a tender heart could not have resisted. It would have struck its colours at once and melted with love and pity for the departing servant bound to serve his country before his mistress. The sole aim of a fond heart of this fibre would have been to take leave with the utmost kindness of the lover who was bound for so distant a goal, where he must encounter the hardships of the most pestilential of climates, in addition to tough encounters with the stout and stubborn Dutch.

But Frances was not made of such metal. She took this last proceeding of Jermyn's, which at the best would separate the two for many months, not as a duty to the state, not as a tribute to honour, but as the crowning example of bravado in his lazy and too assured courtship. It was the last straw which broke the camel's back. She was furiously angry and she did not trouble to keep her anger from its object. Perhaps she began to make the discovery that after all it was not so much her heart as her rampant vanity which was concerned in the entanglement.

When Harry Jermyn paid his call at her quarter of the palace to bid her farewell, and certainly expected to be received with passionate entreaties, tears and lamentations, he was taken aback to find her in all her maid-of-honour's bravery, instead of in the dishabille which befitted a devoted mistress about to be forsaken. Her beauty was only rendered more dazzling and her spirit more striking by the blaze of wrath and scathing raillery with which she hailed him. She told him to "bring back all the female captives he could make in Africa to replace the

beauties in England whom his absence would bring to the grave."

Indignant at what struck him as her heartlessness, he protested and reproached her. He even laid aside his intolerable assumption of superiority and indifference to cry that she could not mean this to be their final interview, she would see him again.

"No," she said with haughty contempt; she begged him to consider this visit as the last which she would consent to receive from him.

And so he made her a sprawling "leg," in the language of the day, while she gave him a profound courtesy, and the pair parted the most polite and irreconcilably incensed couple in the world.

The tables were turned, and though Frances was hard and unrelenting for her sex and years, there can be no question but that the woman-killer Jermyn was rightly served.

However, the fiery young heart awoke to some amount of contrition, which showed itself in a form more characteristic of that time than of this. Frances was guilty of the very youthful, indecorous and decidedly silly proceeding of writing an anonymous letter to Harry Jermyn. It was not a letter intended to recall him, neither was it an admission on her part of having wronged him, it was simply meant to open his eyes to the heinous nature of his behaviour, and to give him an idea of the extent to which he had made her suffer. How she accounted to herself for taking so much trouble in connection with a man whom she had brought herself to despise, it is impossible to decide, but the fact was that her contempt was not much more real and deep than her love. She only knew she was a highly aggrieved young beauty.

Frances's epistolary practice was not great and her style had every chance of being strongly individual and therefore easily recognised like everything else about her. She fell back—she of all women—on a literary disguise. A translation of "Ovid" was at that time in high favour at court. She inscribed her letter as "from a Shepherdess in despair," and modelled it on the high-flown pastoral periods in the epistle "from Ariadne to Theseus" in Ovid. But the intellectual effort was a great strain even on her vigorous wrath and tardy repentance. She broke off midway in the composition and composedly carried about the tell-tale fragment in her pocket. As might have been expected, she dropped the paper in pulling out her handkerchief without noticing the accident.

The foolish missive was picked up, read and bandied about. There was no signature, but the handwriting and some emphatic phrases, even under their stilted disguise, pointed plainly to the writer, while her widely-discussed love affair and its

disastrous termination supplied a clue to the motive of the effusion.

The unscrupulous, mischievous set in which Frances moved were greedy of such food for diversion.

"This paper is yours, is it not, madam?" A grinning courtier handed her the too well-known epistle, while a score of eyes looked on and laughed at her discomfiture.

"Why should it be mine?" cried Frances, taking refuge in an evasion and putting her hands behind her, while her face belied her careless words. The crimson dye which befitted the cheeks of a conscious culprit flew over the fair skin, while her breast heaved. "I'll have none of it."

"But, madam, sure it is writ by you. The letters have every turn of your handwriting; not the dot of an 'i' or the stroke of a 't' is different. You may deny them, but they cannot deny their author."

"Then I writ it for my amusement," she said defiantly.

"And for ours, fair Mrs. Jennings; do not let us fail in gratitude." Her tormentor took himself off with a low bow.

This was gall and wormwood to the proud girl, but it was a testimony to the uprightness of her life in that scandalous court, that while all scoffed at her folly, not one assailed her integrity.

CHAPTER IX.

MARRIED IN HASTE.

HERE was the chance for Dick Talbot, with the Duchess of York to back him. If ever a heart were to be caught in the rebound, surely Frances's might have been while she was still smarting under what she considered the unpardonable affronts to which she had been subjected through the defaulter Harry Jermyn. Also the coast was clear for many a day of the said defaulter bound for the distant wars.

It was no absence of will on Dick's part any more now than before. Among all his enormities, that of being a laggard in anything with which he had to do was never counted against him. But he was frequently of necessity absent on his estates in Ireland, which was itself a far country then, farther off than York or even Scotland, divided from England by a treacherous sea, and, when reached, for the most part a wild inaccessible region hard to get at, and still harder to withdraw from. When one comes to think of it, Ireland was not so much better than Guinea, where easy communication was concerned—Guinea with its combined fleets and ships with dispatches passing to and fro over the open seas.

Besides, Frances in the season of mortification which succeeded her season of triumph was sick of it all—fine court sneering courtiers, grand suitors and servants, who preferred sailing away to the ends of the earth to her service—and Dick Talbot was made to pay for the offence of the other. It was crying injustice, but not worse than is practised every day. If he ever came back to court, he might marry Mrs. Catherine Boynton, who was understood to have been making great eyes at him and executing her not ineffective manœuvre of fainting right off at his feet the last couple of years.

If Frances had been able to find a fair excuse for the extreme step, or anything like a welcome from the ruling power at home after she had taken it, the girl might have been tempted to throw up her post and run away, to be rid of her vexation, to Holywell. There it is possible she would have stayed on in obscurity, married a country bumpkin of the same rank as her father, ruled with a high hand over him and the neighbourhood, and never have been heard of more in the great world.

But she had only been a year in court service, and if she abandoned it, after so brief a trial, when she had begun her career with such *éclat*, and yet had contrived to miss all its prizes, poor Frances was well assured that though her father and her sister Bab might be glad to see her again in her old quarters, Madam Jennings would make them decidedly too hot to hold both herself and her daughter.

Frances could find no solace save in going as often as she could into the City to her kindred, the Hills, and there cultivating the admiring friendship of Cherry Norton. But Speedwell Lane—even if she could have gone oftener there—and her Uncle and Aunt Hill with their complaints and jeremiads, were but a dismal resort and poor company for a girl of Frances' nature, and she was certain to tire of them presently, and be in a frame of mind to take a disgust at them next. She did not tire of Cherry, who, in addition to her look of Bab, had all the attraction of reverses for her so-called cousin. Frances was not likely to get disgusted with Cherry, who adored her patroness with the extraordinary adoration which some very young girls lavish upon elder sisters or on women a few years older than themselves. It was entirely disinterested worship, worth much of the lovers' selfish service on which Frances had begun by setting great store. It held a delicate flattery even for a palate a little sated and vitiated like that of La Belle Jennings.

But even though Frances had a great—to herself well-nigh unaccountable—liking for a simple child like Cherry Norton, it did not seem to the person chiefly concerned that Cherry was quite worth all these otherwise unsatisfactory visits to Speedwell Lane. Frances must secure another resource against that troublesome disease, the spleen of which though it was so common she had known but little when she first came to London; nevertheless it

threatened already, in the short space of twelve months, to overmaster her. She did procure such a resource, and so effectual was it that it cured her of her listlessness and discontent with the world for a term of years.

* There was a large house within easy distance of Whitehall and St. James's, in the suburb of Knightsbridge, which had been taken and was occupied by the numerous members of a family of Irish descent, who had come over from France with the King on the Restoration. They were Hamiltons—Irish, not Scotch—grandchildren of the Earl of Abercorn, and cousins of the Marquis of Ormond. They had all been brought up in exile in France, where, in company with their kindred the Ormonds, they had at first resided in Normandy in dire poverty. Afterwards, when their aunt, the Marchioness of Ormond, went over to Ireland and succeeded in getting from Cromwell such an income from the Marquis's estates as represented what had been her private portion, the combined families were in better circumstances, and repaired to Paris to the Faubourg St. Jacques, where the young people finished their education, the young men entering the service of Louis XIV., and fighting through such campaigns as were generally going on in the Low Countries.

There were four sons and three daughters of the Hamiltons. Of the sons the eldest, Anthony, who had the title of count from the French king, was one of the most elegant scholars, accomplished gentlemen and amiable men of not too strict principles in his generation; he could not have been above two or three and twenty at this date. His brother George, who had been a page-of-honour and been appointed a lieutenant in the King's Guards, was still younger. Of the sisters Elizabeth was one of the court beauties, her "small, delicate, little turned up nose" being reckoned not the least of her charms. To her other attractions she added the peculiar haughty elegance and proud grace of a French education such as was enjoyed by the *haute noblesse* in the days of the Grand Monarque. She was accustomed to wear, according to the fashion of the hour, the usual little curls straying over the forehead, but the slightly doll-like effect of the short ringlets covering the rest of the head was in her case replaced not by the contrast of one or two long curls falling on the shoulders, but by the mass of the hair swept back and fastened by an aigrette of pearls and a fall of lace.

Mrs. Frances Stewart was as accomplished in the exquisite art of dressing. She danced as well, she even spoke Parisian French as well; but there was more wit in Elizabeth Hamilton's little finger than there was in Frances Stewart's whole beautiful body. Elizabeth was not only the clearest-headed of women, she was also the liveliest; more vivacious and witty than Frances

* Grammont.

Jennings at her best. So much pleasure did Elizabeth Hamilton give by her gay jests and not over scrupulous practical jokes at the court, which was so merry its very merriment grew stale and forced at times, that the greatest licence was allowed her. She was not even censured when she was guilty of so glaring an infringement of etiquette as that of forging an invitation in the Queen's name to her masquerade, and sending it to my Lady Muskerrey. This was the origin of that noble simpleton's anxious researches after the Babylonish dress in which she had been requested to appear. Poor Lady Muskerrey! her dress had been chosen for her since then—her deformed person was invested in a widow's weeds by the death of her lord, who had fallen, fighting gallantly enough, in one of the naval engagements with the Dutch this year. Death is too serious a matter to be laughed at with any semblance of good taste even by the most inveterate laughers. One is tempted to speculate how much sympathy did the poor soul receive from her mischievous assailants?

Elizabeth Hamilton had already jested away the heart of the mirror of fashion, the Comte de Grammont. There was as great a disparity between his age and hers as there was between the ages of Dick Talbot and Frances Jennings, but the count on the verge of forty was such a man as not one in a thousand is at any age. Well might he be deemed irresistible by those who held his standard. His vanity together with his imprudence had got him into disgrace at the French court, and he had come to England, like the Hamiltons, soon after the Restoration. He won golden opinions on all sides; his bearing and manners were superb in their refinement; he was the most deeply-skilled player of ombre and basset in the three kingdoms; he was the most courteous squire of dames, so that even the little Queen and her olive-skinned formal Portuguese ladies, who stood aloof from such squires in general, could not resist his Frenchman's French, his punctilious devoirs and flattering deference. Great ladies thought more of his simple gifts of apricot paste, sweet essences, little china coffers, pocket looking-glasses and of the air with which he presented them than of the costliest jewels given by their loutish countrymen. To be chosen by the Comte de Grammont was distinction indeed, and to say that Grammont was to be met continually at the crowded family mansion at Knightsbridge, with its perpetual flow of company, rendered it unnecessary to add that the company was the most *recherché* of its kind in London.

To Frances, when she found an entrance to this society, it must have been a revelation. The court circle was nothing to it, was lumbering, coarse, uncouth in its gambols. She had never known and could not have conceived anything like the fascination of its French brilliance united to its Irish drollery and *abandon*. Her own wit must have received its last stimulus and polish in such

companionship. What wonder that more than Frances's mind was impressed, her heart was captivated by these all accomplished winning adventurers and adventuresses who received her as one of themselves, and made much of her, beside whom Dick Talbot was an obstreperous ruffian, and Harry Jermyn a sorry player?

When the occasion presented itself the girl of sixteen cast all her well-conned and loudly-proclaimed mercenary maxims to the winds. For the attraction was mutual. George Hamilton, the second brother, was fain to lay at Frances's feet the flower of his youthful manhood, the fame he had already acquired as a gallant soldier, and the romantic heroism of his fidelity to his Roman Catholic faith which was costing him dear. He had nothing more substantial to offer, unfortunately, than the sword and the empty purse of a soldier of fortune together with the palm of a martyr to his creed. But he put them at her disposal with an eager devotion which was balm to her wounded pride. He was no laggard in love like Harry Jermyn, and Frances was so infatuated as not to spurn the offer. One little year before she had mocked at romance and made a *mouse* at heroism. She had ranged herself on the side of all that was matter of fact, calculating and worldly. She had accurately measured the marketable value of her fair young beauty, her dauntless spirit and her merry tongue, and settled to give them to the highest bidder. Now she was right willing to forego all her advantages, to act as if she had been the most homely-faced, mean-spirited and dull-witted of maidens by consenting to follow the steps of a strange youth. Moreover, he had already been forced to resign his commission in the Guards because the English Parliament ordained that no Roman Catholic should serve in the King's regiment. He was in fact at this time no better than a poor hanger-on at the court, with an insuperable bar to his preferment. He had literally no brighter prospects than to be sent back where he came from, to become the hanger-on at a foreign court, the exiled representative of an out of date creed, and what was practically a lost cause. But Frances, who had laughed at love and its marvels when she was fifteen, threatened to die of it, if she were crossed, long before she was twenty. When she did take the complaint it was badly indeed.

Her unqualified recantation fairly staggered and dumbfounded her enemies and friends for a season. But the storm of raillery, displeasure and consternation was all the worse when it did break forth. At Whitehall there was a universal shrugging of shoulders and raising of eyebrows, a triumphant cry that La Belle Jennings had found her level. She had been too insolent during her brief reign. What was to be expected of a chit like that who thought herself so much wiser and more virtuous than her neighbours, except that a collapse of some kind was sure to follow?

The Duchess of York, who had advocated Dick Talbot's claims, looked very coldly on the success of his last rival. Poor love marriages were regarded then not merely as acts of disobedience and rebellion against constituted authorities, of all imprudences the grossest and most short-sighted, they were considered barely respectable. The man or the woman guilty of such a match was at once relegated to the company of fools and social vagabonds. Disinterested devotion and generous enthusiasm were very much at a discount in England in the reign of the second Charles. The Duchess was far from an imprudent woman. Her sagacity and common sense were only too paramount. No doubt she was suspected of an inexpedient partiality for the Roman Catholic faith and of confessing in secret to a priest, when she had the opportunity. But if she ever made an open profession of her religion it would only be on her death-bed. Why could not young Hamilton have dissembled like his betters, and embraced Protestantism for the nonce to renounce it at the proper time? Even a lieutenant in the Guards who was one in a large "scrambling" family, the younger son of a younger son, was a miserably poor *parti* for a young beauty, one of the three co-heiresses of such worldly goods as Richard Jennings would leave behind him, a maid-of-honour to the Duchess of York; but a lieutenant deprived of his commission, was ever such madness heard of? It was a positive insult to Frances's gracious mistress.

But such protests were mild compared to the hubbub down at Holywell. The squire and his daughter Bab must have had a poor life of it. Madam Jennings would have rushed to the scene of action, and striking right and left without the least care for the result of her blows, would have striven to turn the tide to victory. But unfortunately for her cause she was laid up with an attack of ague. She could only sit swathed in flannels shivering with cold or burning with fever, issuing the most furious prohibitions to the suit, not only by the sluggish stolid carriers, but by special messengers. Be sure her crowning argument was the sin and shame of her daughter Frances in marrying a Roman Catholic, and the cruel wrong she would do her family by such a compromising act.

The same objection set up the Hills against Frances, and even caused her adored Cherry to grieve for her well-beloved cousin's sake.

As to why Dick Talbot did not make a murderous assault on young George Hamilton, Dick was absent in Ireland at the crisis, and when he returned it was too late to do aught save drink himself into forgetfulness, and vow bootless vengeance against all and sundry.

To be set upon on all sides was no way to subdue Frances; it was the very treatment that would work her up to carry out her intention of defying the world. But she was reduced to taking

refuge with her new friends, the Hamiltons, who vindicated the sincerity of their friendship in her eyes by making her heartily welcome.

In such circumstances a hasty marriage was about the best thing that could be planned, and it would not be difficult to bring it about.

There were two descriptions of marriages illustrative of the era. The one had the accompaniment of troops of friends, great family rejoicings, a procession of coaches, gentlemen leading ladies by the tips of the fingers through gaping crowds into the church fixed on for the ceremony, the return of the company in the same polite fashion, feasting which lasted for the better part of a week, and the pair left at last to their own devices, amidst a parting shower of congratulations. Of course this style of wedding was out of the question in the present instance, but there was always the other resource. The lady went away by herself with not more than a couple of trusty servants, professing nothing further than to pay a simple visit to some accommodating friends down in the country. The gentleman followed after a discreet interval, to pay a similar visit in the same neighbourhood. There was a meeting in church one morning, with nobody present save the bride and bridegroom, the parson and clerk, a friend to give the lady away, and at the utmost a fidgety best man and a quaking best maid. Then followed a hackney-coach journey to London, with a dinner eaten at an inn on the road, and the final goal—an out of the way lodging, where the couple were not known and might have been old married people for aught that the landlord and landlady and the fellow lodgers could tell.

As Frances did not go down to Hertfordshire to boast of her grand marriage, and as she was certainly not wedded either at Whitehall or at St. James's, it may be taken for granted that she and her youthful bridegroom, not above three or four years older than the seventeen years old bride, adopted the latter method of being made one. At this date it is impossible to discover who were the convenient friends—of the Hamiltons rather than of Frances, doubtless—of whom the lady and gentleman made use. Whether Count Anthony Hamilton, with his willingness to oblige and his readiness to set himself aside for the benefit of his relations, or that quintessence of fine gentleman, Count Philibert de Grammont, of whom the languid dandy, Harry Jermyn, was but a poor copy, graced the primitive ceremony, history deponeth not. Neither are we aware whether or not the fascinating madcap, Elizabeth Hamilton, made it the subject of one of her practical jokes ; it is sufficient to say that Frances Jennings and George Hamilton were married without delay.

Love in a cottage—or in its town equivalent, a lodging—in connection with Frances, her hard-headedness and precocious worldly wisdom, is a startling anomaly ; but such anomalies meet

us, if we keep our eyes open, in the reign of Queen Victoria as in the reign of King Charles. Be sure of this, that whether down at Holywell, keeping her own with her formidable mother, or up at St. James's and Whitehall asserting her supremacy among the other beauties and maids, or immured in a shabby lodging managing George Hamilton's no funds till better days should come, Frances was full of independent energy, and equal to all that was asked of her.

Another thing that she was quite equal to all her life was urging her own claims wherever they could be heard.

She was perfectly capable of appearing again at court, braving the nod, titter and wink of the courtiers, and the dignified coldness of the Duchess of York, to press on those who were Roman Catholics at heart the case of the man who was suffering for his Roman Catholic religion.

And she had a very fair amount of success. By the time her first baby daughter Elizabeth was born in 1666, and christened according to her mother's faith at St. Margaret's, Westminster, there had been granted to George Hamilton a pension of five hundred pounds a year "to enable him to support a family," an excellent but somewhat extraordinary reason for the bestowal of a pension. The king knighted him, so that Frances could let her mother know that her impenitent daughter was "Lady Hamilton," while the ireful parent still remained plain "Madam Jennings."

A still more important privilege was given to George Hamilton. He was at liberty to take with him to France, if they chose to accompany him, all the young men in similar circumstances to his own—that is, all the Roman Catholic officers in Charles' service who, by the bill passed in Parliament, were dismissed from the King's Guards, which at that time represented the English army; Louis XVI. had consented to take them into his service as a company of English *gens d'armes*.

Here were substantial gains which, without question, Frances had no small share in acquiring—a pension which, considering the value of money in those days, was not to be despised, with honourable employment and the prospect of high promotion in the future. Verily, La Belle Jennings had not done so very badly, after all, in her mad love marriage, neither had Sir George Hamilton fared the worse for rashly yielding to an impetuous passion.

The drawback was that to cross the Channel, which was only like going home to the Hamiltons, meant expatriation to Frances. However familiar she might have become with French soil by hearsay, her foot had not once trodden it. She had not a friend or ally in Paris. She was a thorough English girl at this date, and though no doubt she read and understood French, she spoke it badly if she spoke it at all. She had not the easy fluency of

soulless prattle in a foreign tongue which characterized her namesake, Mrs. Frances Stewart, far less the tongue of a native which Elizabeth Hamilton kept gaily wagging to some purpose.

(To be continued.)

SOCIAL ECHOES.

By MRS. HUMPHRY.

A PLEASANT feature of the autumn season has been found in the agreeable reunions that have taken place in literary and artistic circles. Lady novelists are notably hospitable, and at their parties one meets all sorts of interesting persons. One of the greatest treats that could be offered to a friend from the country who keeps up with contemporary literature, is to take her to one of these parties and point out to her the various well-known ladies and gentlemen whose books she has been reading of late. As country gentlemen do not often read fiction, I use the feminine pronoun. Our country cousin has doubtless formed her own opinions about the various writers. She has imagined a sort of youthful Duke of Wellington as the author of certain military novels, and is surprised to discover a dark-haired and bright-eyed young married woman to be the real individual. She has probably pictured to her own imagination a sort of Lady Macbeth as the writer of some stories of wrath and danger and revenge; her bewilderment is good to see when she is pointed out a small, blonde-haired, child-eyed girl, instead of the stern and dark-browed woman she had conceived of in her thoughts. We cannot, any of us, hear of another human being, even in the most casual way, without a vague picture of the individual rising before the mind's eye. The more lively imaginations do not permit the picture to remain vague. Each detail is thought out and sketched in, very often quite contrary to the actual fact. Comparison of our own idea of a person with the real person is one of the most enthrallingly interesting of experiences, and if "the proper study of mankind is man," we cannot better pursue it, than by constructing our own author from his or her books, and then seizing the first opportunity of comparing our own creation with that of circumstance. One of the most delightful passages in "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table" refers to the six people who take part in every dialogue. I may be permitted to quote the passage

for the benefit of those who have never read it, if any such there are :

- | | | |
|----------------|---|---|
| " Three Johns | { | 1. The real John ; known only to his Maker.
2. John's ideal John ; never the real one, and often very unlike him.
3. Thomas' ideal John ; never the real John, nor John's John, but often very unlike either. |
| Three Thomases | { | 1. The real Thomas.
2. Thomas' ideal Thomas.
3. John's ideal Thomas." |

If a popular author could only see the various pictures of him that exist in the thousands of minds belonging to those of his readers who have never seen him, he would be only a little less astonished than he would feel if confronted with the very conflicting ideas of him entertained by those who have seen him and have had opportunities of knowing him. Even those of us who have done nothing special and given the world little clue to the man or woman within, have our portraits taken unconsciously by every acquaintance, and it is perhaps not too much to say that not one of them bears any striking likeness to the original. We are so fond of filling in our pictures that we do so without sufficient data to go upon, and thus we sacrifice accuracy to our desire to have a complete portrait. We settle some of our friends' little qualities by purest guess-work, and if they contravene our notions of them we are surprised, and very possibly accuse them of inconsistency.

Our portrait-painting tendencies, at fault as they often are, give one of the greatest charms to society. In them may be found the attraction of such associations as the Salon, the successful literary and artistic club of which so many authors and authoresses are members. We can there compare our own private schedule of our acquaintances' qualities and charms with the unwritten but authentic list at which we can only guess through the deeds and words and looks of the subject of our thoughts, and the occupation is a deeply interesting one.

From literature to the drama can hardly be called even a step. Among the principal dramatic events of the last few weeks was the production of Mr. Gilbert's new play, "*Brantingham Hall*," at the St. James's Theatre, with the new and pretty actress, Miss Julia Neilson, in the principal part. Never was play more unequal than this one, and never was actress more heavily handicapped than the fair exponent of the convict's daughter. The fact that she is made to talk in a curiously Biblical manner, unshared by any other person in the play, is sufficient in itself to make hers a difficult rôle. But, in addition to this, she is given extremely unnatural things to do. The unfortunate young lady could not make any headway against such impediments as these. Now and

then she showed glimpses of a capacity to play well in a bright comedy part, but Mr. Gilbert gave her no chance to show her skill in anything but the most monotonous grief and woe. So imbued was she with the tragic character of her part, that even in the intervals of her spoken words she moaned and sighed inarticulately. Miss Neilson is very young, not twenty yet, I believe, and girls are often more deeply impressed with the woes of life in their teens than when they grow a little more mature. Inexperience is at the root of this young actress's faults, and that she has undoubted talent, in addition to a charming voice and a lovely face, is indubitable. I should like to see her in a bright comedy part. In the pretty love scenes between Miss Norreys and Mr. Fleet, the most unnatural dialogue was uttered in a very delightfully natural manner. The way in which Miss Norreys says: "Dear Mr. Redmayne," and "Yours faithfully," is in the very spirit of true comedy.

There is some pretty acting in the first piece, "A Patron Saint," a comedietta adapted from the French of M. About by Mr. Charles Thomas.

Who would not enjoy seeing Mr. Lionel Brough as a burglar? This is one of the features in the programme with which Mr. Mansfield opens his season at the Globe Theatre before Christmas. In "Editha's Burglar," the stage version of Mrs. Hodgson Burnett's pretty story, Mr. L. Brough is to burgle pleasantly. "Prince Karl" is the piece of resistance, and in the title rôle Mr. Richard Mansfield has proved that he is as clever in comedy as he was in the terrible task of duplicating Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

We are promised "Little Goody Two Shoes" at the Court Theatre on Boxing Day and every afternoon. It is to be played entirely by children, and will be an additional delight for the little ones to anticipate at their own especial season of the year.

Mr. Toole is now back at his own theatre, and "Pepita" has had to be withdrawn in the height of its success. It will doubtless reappear elsewhere before very long. "Dorothy," too, has migrated to the Lyric Theatre, in Shaftesbury Avenue. One is a little liable to confuse this address with the Shaftesbury Theatre, in the same avenue, where the iron curtain now permits the audience to see the stage, after its contumacious behaviour on what was to have been the first night of Miss Wallis's "Pauline" in "The Lady of Lyons."

Very shortly after these lines appear, we shall be in the full tide of pantomime season. At Drury Lane we are to have "The Babes in the Wood," after "unprecedented preparations." At Covent Garden, Hengler's Circus is to be located, which sounds to the Londoner much as though one should say: "Regent Street will be in Piccadilly," so accustomed are we to associate the

delightful equine performances with the house named after Mr. Hengler in Argyll Street. May the little ones be happy this Christmas, and the children of the poor be remembered by the rich!

LONDON SOCIETY.

FEBRUARY, 1889.

"SHEBA."

A STUDY OF GIRLHOOD.

By "RITA,"

AUTHOR OF "DAME DURDEN," "DARBY AND JOAN," "THE LADY NANCY,"
"GRETCHEN," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XX.

MRS. ORMATROYD DEFINES UNSELFISHNESS.

SHEBA took her way past the wharves and docks, looking about her with considerable curiosity. She had only been to Sydney once in her life, though it was so near West Shore, and it seemed to her a very wonderful and beautiful place.

It was too early in the morning for any great stir of life, and the girl being totally ignorant of what part of the town her mother lived in, wandered somewhat aimlessly about. She found herself in a narrow and unsavoury street chiefly populated by Chinese; then she passed warehouses, offices, public buildings, dark alleys, opening out here and there into wider and more important streets. Finally she made her way into George Street, where the shops were just opening, and an early omnibus or two was driving along in leisurely fashion amidst carts with market produce, fruit, and fish.

Sheba began now to feel somewhat hungry. She walked into a baker's shop and bought a couple of rolls and then asked the man who served her if he could direct her to Mr. Levison's private house.

"Mr. Levison," said the man. "Oh, he lives out at the Glebe. It's a long way from here. You'd better take an omnibus. One runs every hour from the corner of King Street."

Sheba thanked him and left the shop. She was not tired and a walk of four or five miles did not terrify her. Besides she had no more money and an omnibus would mean another shilling at

least. She therefore set out resolutely to walk the distance, feeling rather pleased at the novelty of her surroundings.

The houses grew fewer after a time and took the shape of villas more or less ambitious in design and surrounded by spacious grounds. Sheba glanced curiously at the gateways as she passed. At last she reached one sheltered by large oaks, and with a name carved in the stonework.

It was the name for which she was looking—"Oaklands"—Mr. Levison's place. Opening the handsome iron gate with considerable difficulty, Sheba entered, and found herself in a sort of avenue. The trees were gigantic even to her eyes, accustomed as they were to forest giants; the grounds all around were beautifully laid out with every variety of shrub and flowering plants. She found herself at last approaching the house. It looked almost palatial, she thought, though it was merely a wide two-storied building with a verandah running all round, supported by stone pillars.

The girl walked into the verandah, and passed two or three rooms with French windows opening on to it, and prettily draped with soft lace curtains.

Suddenly she paused. The sound of a familiar voice reached her ears. She looked straight before her into a room, the like of which she had never seen. The light of a bright wood-fire played over the costly furniture, the books and pictures and snowy napery and shining silver and dainty china. There were flowers and fruit and wine and coffee on the table, and seated at it were two people: one a stout middle-aged Jewish-looking man, the other——

For a moment Sheba stood aghast. Could this be her mother; this the martyr she had pictured in the midst of sorrowful slavery! This laughing rosy comely woman with her fair hair crêped and puffed, her substantial figure in a loose grey morning gown of fashionable make and manifold trimmings of lace and ribbon, her fair plump hands busy with the silver and china of the breakfast equipage, her voice no longer harsh or complaining, but gay and cheerful as her surroundings.

Sheba felt stunned and stupified for a moment; the picture before her was so utterly different from the picture those mournful letters had framed, and her own fancy had supplemented.

Almost unconsciously her hand touched the fastening of the long windows, and the noise she made attracted Mr. Levison's attention. He turned in that direction and his exclamation of surprise caused his companion to do the same.

Seeing she was observed, Sheba turned the handle and walked into the room.

Dusty, pale, with lowered brows and angry eyes, she stood before her mother, who was too utterly startled to do more than gasp out her name.

"Yes," said the girl, "it is I. . . . I have come to see you. . . I thought you were ill, lonely, unhappy. . . Your letters always said so, and it was so long twelve whole months."

Mrs. Ormatroyd's face grew perfectly livid. If it had not been for Mr. Levison's presence she felt she could have struck the girl in that first moment of rage and shame and speechless fury. As it was she did her best to calm her face into some expression of maternal joy, and rose slowly to her feet and kissed her daughter coldly on her brow.

"This is a great surprise," she said with asperity. "Why on earth didn't you write and say you were coming? And oh, good gracious! what a sight you look . . . all over dust and mud."

"Is this your little girl?" asked Mr. Levison amiably and opportunely. "And so she has come over to see you at last. Dear me! Well, surprises are always pleasant. Come and shake hands with me, my dear, and let me see if you are at all like your handsome mother."

Sheba turned her dark and lowering face and wrathful eyes in the direction of the speaker, and then looked at him from top to toe. He bore the scrutiny with smiling good-humour. He did not guess for a moment that that uncompromising young mind had put him down as vulgar and ostentatious, and that it cost the girl a great effort to give him her hand.

"No," said Mrs. Ormatroyd sharply, "she is not at all like me in anything. What a very odd thing of you to do, Sheba, to come across to Sydney without letting me know. What were the Saxtons about to let you?"

"I didn't tell them I was coming," said the girl, turning once more to look at the changed and most unmournful figure. Ten years younger. Yes, Ted was quite right.

"Ah," interposed Mr. Levison, "an impulse, an impulse of affection. How charming! A little—well, not home-sick—but mother-sick, eh? Upon my word I don't wonder at it! What should I do without her, so what must the loss be to her children?"

It was a new experience to Sheba to see her mother blush and cast down her eyes, and falter out bashful denial to compliments. It was an experience that turned her cold and sick, and made her ask herself if she were not the victim of some malignant dream.

"Well, well," continued Mr. Levison, "suppose we give you some breakfast; you look tired, and to have reached here by this time you must have started very early."

"I don't want any breakfast, thank you," said Sheba curtly.

"Nonsense," said her mother sharply, "now you are here you must have something to eat. If Mr. Levison will excuse me a moment I will take you to my room, and you can wash the dust off your face and make yourself presentable. At present you look a perfect object."

Sheba said nothing. She felt her presence here was undesirable, that her mother was angry and Mr. Levison surprised; but that matters would have been any better if she had only intimated her intention of paying them a visit, she never thought. In silence she followed her mother from the room, and Mr. Levison's eyes followed her with no small amusement and surprise.

"I thought she was quite a child," he said to himself as the door closed on the two figures. "Why, she is nearly grown up and looks like a tragedy queen. I wonder what she'll do when she hears the news? and what did she mean by saying she thought her mother was unhappy?"

Meanwhile Mrs. Ormatroyd led the way into a spacious and elegantly-furnished bedroom, then closing the door and bolting it she turned round on Sheba and seized her arm like a vice, while her face grew perfectly white with passion.

"How *dare* you?" she hissed out in a fury that nearly stifled her. "How dare you come here like this, you spy, you disobedient, prying, underhand, *hateful* girl! You know I detest scenes. I had my own reasons for not wishing you to come here, and now—now——"

Her grasp relaxed; she burst into a flood of angry passionate tears.

Sheba only drew back and looked at her in white, stony wonderment. It seemed to her that her mother's anger was out of all proportion to her mistake. The old sickening sense of her own loneliness and lovelessness came over her, and yet a burning wave of indignation swept through her heart as she asked herself in what lay her real offence.

"I see now," she said at last, "that you had good reasons for not wishing me to see you. Why did you not say so in your letters? You represented yourself as lonely and sad and hard worked, and I . . . oh, I felt so sorry always for you, and I thought only of being able to work for you and keep you, and so did Hex, and all the time——"

Her glance of wrathful disgust was like fuel to the fire. Mrs. Ormatroyd had been tried severely enough by the jarring discord of her presence, and now that she dared to add reproach to so unwelcome an intrusion it was unnatural to suppose that any maternal spirit could bear such treatment with equanimity.

"You are a perfect little idiot!" she cried stamping her foot. "Ever since you could walk or stand alone you have done nothing but worry and vex me. I never heard of any one doing such things as you do, never. Did you suppose I was going to wear black all the rest of my days, and never smile or take any pleasure in life again? Such rubbish! And as for you and Hex working for me—why, you talk like a baby! You work for me—*you*! Why, you haven't the sense necessary to get your own living, leave alone supporting any one else, and I am not of the nature to accept

sacrifices, even from my children ! But, thank Heaven, there will be no need for you to *work*, as you so grandiloquently talk of doing, and as for Hex—well, he shall have only his mother to thank for his prospects. I have made up my mind he shall go to England and have a profession."

"But how—when?" asked Sheba in a stifled voice, as Mrs. Ormatroyd paused for sheer want of breath. "Go to England . . where will you get the money?"

Mrs. Ormatroyd drew herself up and shook out her delicate grey draperies and looked straight at her daughter's white distressed face. Then she said slowly, clearly, without falter or tremor in her voice :

"I am going to marry Mr. Levison."

For a moment Sheba stood there perfectly motionless. Every drop of blood seemed to rush to her heart, and then flow in a boiling wrathful torrent through her veins.

It seemed as awful as if her mother had said she was going to commit a crime. *Marry Mr. Levison!* Marry again, and that odious, stout, Jewish man with his thick lips and greasy black hair and vulgar manners. Oh, the shame, the horror; and her father, her poor forgotten father!

"Well," said Mrs. Ormatroyd sharply, "are you going to stand there all day? I daresay you are surprised. . . . I was surprised myself. He is so rich . . . and he knows almost every one worth knowing in Sydney . . . but still he has done me the honour to propose, and though I don't approve of second marriages, this is quite an exceptional case, and I owe it to my children to provide for them, not leave them to the charity of strangers."

Sheba coloured hotly.

"You don't—care—for this man, then," she said.

"Care?" Mrs. Ormatroyd looked a little perplexed. "Do you mean am I in love, like some romantic school girl? Good heavens, no! But I am going to marry him."

"Oh, mother!" cried Sheba in a voice of such horror, and yet such misery, that Mrs. Ormatroyd started.

"Why do you stare like that?" she cried resentfully; "and don't call me mother in that vehement manner. I hate it, and it's no use your making yourself disagreeable over the affair. I have a perfect right to do what I like."

"If you wanted money," Sheba went on regardlessly, "Hex and I would have worked for you. We thought and talked of nothing else all this year, and now to think of your doing this, selling yourself to a vulgar hateful Jew just because——"

"Sheba!" stormed her mother, "be silent, I insist on it. How dare you speak so of my—my future husband, and your future father?"

"*Never*," burst tempestuously from the girl's lips, "never, never *that!* I wouldn't call him by that name if you killed me for

refusing; I won't live with him, I would sooner drown myself. It is wicked to put another man in poor papa's place; a child cannot have two fathers, and no woman ought to have two husbands. It is a sin, and I am sure God never meant it!”

Mrs. Ormatroyd sank down on a chair and fairly gasped. What on earth was she to say to such an utterly irrational, headstrong creature, as this awful daughter of hers? Why, she was worse than ever, and she was too tall now and too old-looking to be beaten into subjection.

Was ever any mother so tried? . . . and there was breakfast waiting and Mr. Levison of course expecting their return . . . and how could she take this rude, outspoken, unmanageable creature into his presence? Why, she would insult him to his face.

Her heart grew bitter within her. The dislike she always felt to dictation or opposition, in no way helped her to condone Sheba's offences in that line. She wondered, as she had often done, why Providence had thought fit to inflict her with such a daughter, and only wished it were possible to beat Sheba, or shut her up here for twenty-four hours with nothing but bread and water. As this was not quite possible she next bethought herself of her old plan of rule by authority, and turning to the girl she said with dignity:

“Sheba, I brought you up to show your parents implicit obedience; a fine thing indeed if one is to be dictated to by one's own children. Now listen to me, and remember that I will not discuss this matter with you again. In the first place, Mr. Levison is not a Jew, at least by religion. He cannot of course help what his parents were. He is extremely kind and has been a very good friend to me and will be an equally good friend to my children, just as I am prepared to be a mother to his little girl. You know very well my health is not strong, and I am not fit to battle with the world, and it would be simply flying in the face of Providence to throw away such an offer as this. I was myself coming over to West Shore to see Hex and you, and tell you all about it, but you have upset all my arrangements and annoyed me excessively by this uncalled-for visit. It is just one of your mad freaks; I was in hopes you had outgrown them. However, now I have taken the trouble to explain all this, you must prepare to accept the change in my life as—as resignedly as I do. It is not my own happiness I am considering . . . only my children's future good, and one day you will see it, and perhaps thank God in your rebellious heart for such an unselfish and sacrificing mother.”

Sheba listened in stony silence; her face was very pale, her lips sternly set. Scorn and disgust spoke out more plainly than any words in her look and attitude. As if she could not read between the lines . . . as if she did not know what her mother's “sacrifices” meant. Why did she not speak the truth? why was she not honest enough to say: “I don't like being an upper servant

when I have the chance of being mistress. I want wealth, comfort, shelter, ease; I have the chance of them all and I mean to take it." Sheba felt she could have respected that statement if only for its coarse frankness, but to listen to pretty platitudes, misrepresented facts, to see selfishness wreathed and garlanded with floral tributes like the sacrificial beasts of the old idolatrous faiths, it was too hateful!

Mrs. Ormatroyd felt uncomfortable at the long silence, the colourless mute face. "What have you to say?" she asked sharply. "One would think you were deaf. Will you come back to the breakfast-room and be civil to Mr. Levison? Your manner when I introduced you was almost insulting—but then you did not know——"

"I will never accept him as my father," reiterated Sheba sternly.

"That," said Mrs. Ormatroyd, "may be as you please. If you do not wish to live under my roof I must make other arrangements for you. Thank goodness, I have one loving and dutiful child. Hex will be with me at all events. I shall go back with you this afternoon to the Crow's Nest, and see them all and break the news. I do not wish my actions misrepresented."

A little odd smile just touched Sheba's pale lips. "You need not fear," she said, "that I should do—that."

CHAPTER XXI.

PERSUASION.

MRS. Ormatroyd returned to the breakfast-room alone. Mr. Levison was still at the table. He looked up expectantly.

"Where's your little girl?" he said. "I just told nurse to bring Dollie down, I thought she would amuse her."

"My poor child is dreadfully fatigued," said Mrs. Ormatroyd apologetically. "She has been foolish enough to walk all the way from the ferry, and is quite knocked up. I have made her lie down, and you must excuse her. She will be better after a rest."

"Have you told her the news?" asked Mr. Levison.

"Of course," said Mrs. Ormatroyd with a fluttered blush. "It was a great surprise—very great. She is such an odd child, so different to her brother. Sheba has always been a trouble and anxiety to me. I really can't understand her."

"So she doesn't like the idea?" said Mr. Levison, rising and cutting short further explanations. "I thought she wouldn't when I saw how she looked at me——"

"Oh, I assure you," said Mrs. Ormatroyd eagerly, "she likes you very well, and she is so pleased to think I shall have a home at last."

He laughed—a little grimly. "Well," he said, "it won't matter one way or other. She will get used to me after a bit. And now I must be off. I shall be late at the office. Dear me—nearly eleven o'clock. Your little girl will stay now she is here, I suppose?"

"No," said Mrs. Ormatroyd, "I fear not; she must go back to-day, and I am going with her if—if you don't object. I wish to see my son, and also make some arrangements with those people with whom Sheba has been staying. Besides"—and she looked at the ground with becoming bashfulness—"now that I am engaged to you, it is not—well, not quite *etiquette* for me to remain under your roof. I really think I had better stay with the Saxtons until—until the time fixed for our marriage."

"Oh, damn *etiquette*," said David Levison good-humouredly. "I can't have you all that way off, you know. If you want to stay anywhere you can go to the Moss's in Fort Street. They'll be delighted to have you, and they're sort of cousins of mine by marriage. I'll arrange it all."

"Just as you please," said Mrs. Ormatroyd, to whom a visit to the Crow's Nest did not specially commend itself. Then she rang to have the table cleared and took a chastily saddened farewell of her affianced, and saw him leave for his office with inward satisfaction. Once alone she ordered the carriage to be ready in half-an-hour's time, and then went to her room to change her morning gown for an out-door costume of plain black cloth.

Sheba was sitting by the window and watched her mother's preparations in silence.

"I am going to take you back," Mrs. Ormatroyd said presently. "I shall give the Saxtons a piece of my mind for letting you start off by yourself in this fashion."

"I told you they did not know," said Sheba wearily. "I left the Crow's Nest at six o'clock."

"You deserve to be locked up and kept on bread and water," said her mother wrathfully. "If you were only a little younger I would do it. Heaven knows when you are going to get a little sense, or behave like a rational creature! I should have thought with such an example as Bessie Saxton's you would have improved in some slight degree, but your present conduct doesn't look as if you had."

Sheba set her lips tight and said nothing. She felt it would be useless. She had done an unwise thing in coming here, and she felt herself an unwelcome intruder in what would soon be her mother's own house.

Its beauty and luxury did not appeal to her in any single degree, rather they awoke in her a feeling of shame and degradation, since it was for things like these that Mrs. Ormatroyd was about to sell herself, and so wreck the whole of Sheba's schemes for an independent future.

When the carriage was announced she followed her mother without deigning to cast a look at the rooms through which they passed. The only thing that moved her was the sudden appearance of a little, fair-haired, laughing child, who ran out into the verandah as they left it, and called out after Mrs. Ormatroyd.

That lady turned instantly, and then went back and took the child in her arms and kissed her with the warmest affection, explaining that she would be back next day, a fact about which the little girl did not appear to concern herself.

Sheba looked on and wondered if she had ever received such caresses, or been addressed by such endearing words. If so, she decided it must all have happened before her memory had been roused from the passive into the active state.

Then they got into the carriage and drove off, Mrs. Ormatroyd maintaining a dignified silence until they reached the ferry and took the steamer across to the opposite shore.

When they reached the landing-place the first person they saw was Noel Hill. Mrs. Ormatroyd greeted him with dignity and immediately treated him to a dissertation on Sheba's extraordinary freak and its consequent trouble and annoyance to herself.

"And, how ever I am to walk to the Crow's Nest I can't imagine," she lamented. "I am so unused to exercise now, and Mr. Levison always insists upon my having the carriage . . . it is all owing to this inconsiderate and vexatious girl!"

"I never wanted you to come back with me," said Sheba curtly. "It was your own desire. And you know there are no cabs or carriages this side of the water!"

Noel Hill interposed. He saw that matters were a little strained between mother and daughter. He suggested that Mrs. Ormatroyd should rest at the Parsonage, which was only two miles off, and then—and then if she felt equal to the fatigue she might go on to the Crow's Nest in the evening.

To this Mrs. Ormatroyd consented, and the trio set out to walk up the long rough hilly road.

Mrs. Ormatroyd chattered volubly in a light agreeable fashion, having learnt during her residence in Sydney that she was entitled to consider herself fascinating, and even intellectual—and intellect, in her opinion, was chiefly made known to the world in general by fluency of conversation.

Sheba was quite silent. She felt faint and weak after her long journey and her long fast, and she looked so weary and so miserable that Noel Hill found himself again and again wondering what had happened.

Mrs. Ormatroyd's incessant chatter about Sydney society and Sydney gaities irritated him almost beyond endurance, though he did his best to listen with some show of interest.

He was thankful when they reached the Parsonage and he

could leave Mrs. Ormatroyd to indulge in maternal ecstasies over Hex, who had grown so tall and looked so well, and was more like herself, she fondly declared, than ever.

As soon as his uncle appeared, Noel Hill slipped away. He had seen Sheba leave the room and cross the verandah, and he wondered where the girl was going. He followed and overtook her at the gate.

"Where are you going, Miss Sheba?" he asked quickly. "Not to the Crow's Nest, surely?"

"Yes," said the girl, "I am not wanted here—why should I stay?"

"But your mother has only just arrived," he said; "you surely won't leave her so abruptly?"

For all answer Sheba opened the gate and walked down the road. He hesitated a moment or two—then followed.

"What has happened to you?" he asked quickly as he reached her side, "you look so strange, and your manner is so odd. Was your mother angry with you for going over to Sydney? I don't wonder at it. The Saxtons are also very much annoyed. You ought to have told them."

Sheba stopped short and looked at him. "Are they angry too?" she faltered. "I did not mean to do anything wrong . . . but it is always so with me . . . I only wanted to see my mother—to know if what Ted Sanderson had said about her was true——"

"And was it?" he asked gently, as her voice broke into a half-suppressed sob.

"Yes," she said stormily, "quite true! she has forgotten papa—forgotten us too, I think. She wears fine clothes and lives in a beautiful house, and she is going to—to marry the man who owns it——"

The disgust and wrath in her face would have amused Noel Hill had it not been for the inward tragedy it displayed. He was not surprised at her news. Mrs. Ormatroyd's hints and simpers had prepared him for it in some measure. Besides it was just the sort of thing he would have expected her to do, and then pose as a martyr for doing.

"And I thought she was unhappy," Sheba cried passionately—"unhappy and working herself to death for us, and my whole thought has been to lift the burden from her shoulders . . . to fit myself to work that she might rest, and all the time . . . all the time——"

She turned aside. Her chest heaved. Great bitter tears welled into her eyes. Noel Hill read the struggle going on within her heart, and he pitied her with all the depth and earnestness of his own. But he dared not tell her so. In her present state of mind he felt it would be unwise, and that—even if it hurt her—he must show her the path where duty led,

and bid her curb the resentment of passion, and the instincts of revolt.

"Sheba," he said gently, "don't go to the Crow's Nest in your present mood. Come back with me and let us go to my own little study and talk this matter quietly over. I can feel it is a trial to you; but my teachings must have been of very little effect if you have not learnt that life is made up of such trials, and that they must be faced—endured with patience, not rebellion. You know I never preach to you . . . it is not my way . . . but be guided by my advice now. I don't think you will be sorry for it."

"You are always good to me," said the girl with a heavy sob. "I think you are the only person I have ever met who does really understand me! Yes—I will go back with you. I have let my temper run away with me as usual. I am sorry I ever went to Sydney!"

He did not say more, only walked quietly by her side till they reached the house and then led the way into his own little "den," as he called it, where he wrote and studied, and sometimes gave his lessons.

There he made her sit down in the big old leather chair, and presently brought her a cup of tea and some biscuits, which he insisted upon her eating before he would speak to her at all.

The result was that Sheba soon became calm and refreshed, and was more prepared to look upon her impulsive action in the rational light of her tutor's eyes. Her nature was firm, but not stubborn, and she was always easily ruled by affection or rational appeal; unfortunately her mother had never employed either of these methods, and hence it was that the two natures so invariably clashed in all matters that entailed discussion.

Noel Hill went to work gently and skilfully. He pointed out that a child's duty was obedience—up to a certain point; that her mother had a perfect right to please herself and marry again if she thought it desirable. It might seem a moral offence to Sheba's overstrained and utterly innocent ideas, but the world did not consider it so, and Mrs. Ormatroyd was not likely to sacrifice ease and comfort for sake of a child's prejudice.

"But I cannot look upon him as a father," cried the girl, "and I could not bear to live under his roof as she says I must—I *could not*."

"But if it is your duty?" said Noel Hill gently. "Remember that the Saxtons are not even relatives—you cannot expect them to offer you a home always—circumstances will be altogether different; and people will really blame your mother if you do not live under her roof. You see you place her in an uncomfortable position as well as yourself."

Sheba was silent. Self-will, duty and inclination were having a fierce battle within her heart.

"Oh!" she cried, "why can't things remain as they are? not be always altering and changing I was so happy and I thought it would last, and now everything is different—everything."

"Change is a law of nature and a law of life," said Noel Hill. "Nothing remains quiescent, that is why happiness should always be received with trembling fear—not with exultant certainty. Existence has infinitely more prose than poetry about it, though that sounds an unpalatable truth in the ears of sixteen. As I have often told you, I hate to preach; but there are certain things that must be said, and, young as you are, you have learnt that sorrow is a more constant friend than joy."

Sheba moved restlessly. "I hope," she said suddenly, "that the dead do not know. I was thinking of poor papa. Just a year—barely a year and now to give his place to some one else: call a stranger—husband."

Noel Hill looked at her with thoughtful searching eyes. "How true a nature," he thought, "and how deeply she will love—some day."

It hurt him to see the pain in her eyes as they sought his, beseeching in some way for comfort which he felt he could not give—for duty is a hard thing to preach, and a distasteful thing to practise, and yet he could but speak to her of it, and its exactions and possible reward.

He spoke as he felt—sincerely, conscientiously, earnestly—but all the time he felt very sorry for the girl, and he did not anticipate any wholesome results—to her—from the forthcoming sacrifices entailed by her mother's new mode of life.

The past year had done her a great deal of good. He scarcely liked to think what another might—undo. But it was not his way to hint discouragement, and when, half-an-hour later, Sheba entered the sitting-room where her mother was still occupied in petting Hex, and painting a brilliant future for him as a reward for his patience and dutifulness in the past, all traces of ill-temper and insubordination had vanished, and she was so meek and quiet that Mrs. Ormatroyd could not understand the change at all. She was still more puzzled when, finding herself alone with her mother for a few moments, Sheba rose and standing before her said quietly: "I must ask you to forgive me for my rudeness this morning. I had no right to speak to you as I did. I will try to—to like Mr. Levison—if you wish."

Had Mrs. Ormatroyd been a wise woman, she would have accepted the girl's submission with some sense of the ordeal her spirit had gone through ere she would have made it; but not being wise, she only drew herself up haughtily and delivered to her daughter a lecture both severe and judicial on the subject of her unbearable temper, her physical shortcomings, and general deficiencies.

It was gall and wormwood to poor Sheba to listen to it after the effort her penitence had cost her. But she did listen, and without a word, and when it was over only crept quietly away to the farthest and most remote corner of her old "wilderness," and there, throwing herself down under the great leafless trees, she cried as if her heart would break—cried as she had never done during all the weeks and days of this past year that stood out alone in her short and troubled life as "happy."

CHAPTER XXII.

INTROSPECTION.

Two months later, when the glorious Australian spring was holding its brief reign, Mrs. Ormatroyd was married, and Sheba had to bid farewell to the Crow's Nest. Never had the old house looked so lovely, she thought, buried as it was in masses of blossom from the peach and orange and pear trees that surrounded it so closely, and made the whole air heavy with their fragrance. Never had she so valued the time and liberty to roam at will through the wild bush tracts, where as yet neither house, nor hut, nor settlement betrayed the advance of civilized life.

For days before she left, the girl spent her time in wandering to all her favourite nooks and resorts. Sometimes Bessie Saxton went with her, but more often she went alone, or with Billy trotting at her heels; poor, pretty Billy, who must be left behind when his young mistress went to her new home, as Mrs. Ormatroyd would not hear of the Levison grounds being desecrated by such a specimen of animal life.

Bessie could not sympathize at all with her friend's dislike to the Sydney prospect. She thought her more than foolish. What was the use of being buried in a place like West Shore, where you never saw a human creature, outside the members of your own family, from one year's end to another? She had intimate hopes of sharing in Sydney gaieties and luxuries, for the new Mrs. Levison would surely invite her to stay with them. She was therefore very amiable at present to the girl, and specially bent on impressing on her mind the advantages that would naturally accrue from her mother's changed prospects.

But Sheba did not seem impressed by any of Bessie's arguments, and she certainly did nothing towards raising her spirits, or reconciling her to the change so near at hand.

The day before she left the Crow's Nest she rose very early, and, making her breakfast off a slice of bread and some milk, she set out to bid farewell to the old house and the "wilderness," which represented to her so much that was happy, and sorrowful, and strange and perplexed, of her child-life.

It was very early—scarcely five o'clock—the dew still lay on bud and blossom, and the dusty road was damp and sweet, as if with the tears of some new-fallen shower.

A soft wind blew the heavy fragrance of the peach and orange blossoms across her face as she walked past the old familiar palings; starry passion flowers were wreathing the wooden pillars of the verandah; the great oleander tree that fronted the steps was a maze of rose-coloured blossom, and its rich, sweet scents were to Sheba as the greeting of an old friend.

She felt her eyes grow dim as she looked at it—the pride of the garden—the loveliest tree of its kind in the whole neighbourhood; that strong, sweet perfume turned her faint with many memories. Whenever she felt the scent of the oleander blossoms she always thought of one scene in her life . . . how she had stood under the great tree one mild spring evening, and Ted Sanderson had brought her a book, and she had opened it and read the first story—the story of a boy who had been accidentally killed by a schoolfellow in a fit of passion. There had been a picture of it, and she had shuddered with horror as she had looked at the beautiful young dead face, and the terrified, remorseful eyes of the boy criminal as he gazed at his victim. The story had been to her like a real thing. She had *seen* the very persons who took part in it—had followed out the incidents even to the bringing home of the dead boy in his coffin, and the agonized grief of his heart-broken mother.

She had been so wrought upon by the story that she had sat there under the rosy blossoms, with the book on her lap and the heavy tears falling on its pages, until long after the time she should have been in bed, and then had been sharply reprimanded for her conduct, and obliged to give up the book as a punishment.

How it all came back to her now—how it always had come back every time that the oleander broke into flower, and its subtle perfume thrilled her senses with almost painful intensity.

She wondered why memory was almost always painful to her, why scenes and faces and deeds became almost tragic in what they represented, or recalled. The fact of remembering too intensely is a great drawback to happiness—Sheba had always found it so. She wondered whether she always would find it so, as she stood in the old familiar garden and looked with loving and regretful eyes at every tree and flower that held a history of some sort for her. Then soberly and silently she walked on past the old well where the frogs were croaking, and past the hives where the bees hummed and swarmed so busily, and everywhere the ground was starred with the delicate pink and white of fallen blossoms, or rich with colour of newly-opened flowers.

The "wilderness" seemed alive with bird and insect life.

Bright-winged birds flew about the boughs, gorgeous butterflies fluttered through a maze of leafy shrubs, and a wall of tender green seemed to shut out the brilliant blue of the sky, and shut in the peace and solitude that nature loves best, and that always seems to consecrate her handiwork.

Sheba sank down on her knees and hid her face in her hands. Another chapter of her life had ended, and she felt instinctively that the future meant struggle, difficulty, hardship and—only too probably—unhappiness.

Conflict and duty—life seemed made up of these elements, and only the warm sure shelter of deep human love could in any way make such life endurable. But she was not going to any such shelter; only to a narrow and trying existence, at which she looked now with that sad hopelessness of extreme youth, when the soul is full of desires, and the world answers them with chill laughter, or heartless silence.

The thrill and ecstasy which had once swept over her senses as she pictured all too vividly what Love might mean, had faded into a dim and colourless outline.

Filled to the core and centre of her being with thirsty, passionate longing after the good, the beautiful, the true, she only saw the gates of the future closing on all such longings, only felt her young eager soul strain as the ear strains after dying harmonies, to hear them sink faintly, irrevocably away into un-reachable space. She knelt there in the silence and beauty of the young day, and wondered vaguely why life had always seemed to her so sad a thing; why even nature, for which she had so tender a love, always touched her heart too deeply for pleasure to counter-balance pain. And of such feelings she could speak to no one, having some sure perception that they would not be understood, and might only serve as food for mockery. As much as it was possible for her to confide, she had confided in Noel Hill, but there was a wide space between their two natures, and she knew that in his eyes she was but a child. Her heart was in excess of her mind; she *felt* too fiercely and eagerly to reason as to *what* she felt, and until she could subdue that spirit and bring it down to the nearer level of every-day common-place humanity, she would never find existence a comfortable thing.

If individual life was just suited to its individual surroundings, there would be an end to all such conflicts as these, and character would need no discipline, but expand naturally under congenial influences. But, looking out on the battle-field of humanity, we find that the surroundings are invariably at variance with the character, disposition and mind of the individual. Hence the perpetual warfare which Sheba's awakening soul began dimly to recognize, and for which her strange nature was as dimly endeavouring to arm itself.

Shut in now in her self-chosen solitude, she went over every

detail of her child-life. She felt sorry for herself as she let her memory range over those mistaken heroisms, those pitiful mistakes, those ill-aimed intentions which invariably fell short of their mark, those hours of prayers and tears and struggles! And amongst them all what a lonely figure she looked—uncomprehended and uncomprehending, yet feeling the keenness of need, the strength of impulse, as one far beyond her years and experience might have felt them.

Sheba had gone through many phases of feeling and many grades of experience in her short life, by reason of that habit of hers of *thinking out* everything that came into that life. She did not pass things by as mere accidents of occurrence, but looked into the why and wherefore of them all, and formed her own theories respecting them. But now it seemed to her that her spirit had suddenly lost its way in the mazes of life. The irrevocable law of change had stepped between her and the peace and happiness she had enjoyed for one short year, and as she lifted her troubled face to Heaven and faltered out some fragmentary prayer, she yet could not but acknowledge that the vital principle of religion was as a dead letter to her soul, and that long familiarity with its “forms” yet seemed of very little help or sustenance in moments such as these.

A sudden wave of bitterness came over her heart. “What am I, that God should care for me, or listen to me?” she thought. “Have I ever had a prayer answered? has ever one single thing in my life been altered though I brought all my faith to the petition that asked it? No. It seems time and feeling wasted on nothing. It is all very well for Noel Hill to talk: he is a clergyman, and he lives for God’s service, and perhaps God does recognize him and his work—but as for me——”

There she broke off, almost frightened at her own audacity. “Oh, how wicked I am!” she thought, and a faint sob broke the stillness of her leafy shelter. “Why can’t I remember God’s way is not man’s way?”

But though she put rebellion aside, it was not conquered. She was too young and fervid for the philosophy of stoics, and that deeper, sweeter patience that comes as the discipline of endurance and accepted sorrow, was as yet a stranger to her nature.

She had never felt so utterly lonely as she felt in this hour, because she had never before gone so deeply into the root and meaning of her feelings. The panorama of her childish life had unrolled itself scene by scene, incident by incident, until it had faded away, and now she seemed to awake and ask herself, “What next?” And even as she asked it she trembled, disturbed by some vague fear. Visions of a narrow beaten track she must perforce tread, of domestic tyranny to which she must yield, of perpetual self-sacrifice amounting almost to intellectual extinction

rose before her eyes, and her heart throbbed in passionate revolt, crying out, "I cannot bear it; this—is not life!"

Then a sudden flush of shame stole to her cheek and her heart seemed to grow quiet and humble. What was she, one small insignificant atom in the vast heaving, throbbing mass of humanity, that life should come to her in other guise than it came to infinitely greater and worthier souls? What was she, to demand a richer, fuller, more wonderful existence?—as if her will and pleasure were central figures in the universe, and her nature deserved special response to its exactions!

She felt as some frightened pigmy who had taken up arms against a giant, and on seeing the giant approach could only throw them down in terror, and beg for mercy.

She drew a long deep breath and pushed the heavy hair away from her brow. It seemed to her that she had ignored the Pattern of all lives, the Source of strength and Teacher of fortitude; that she must bring herself to sit at His footstool and learn meekness and endurance as the greatest of all life's lessons, because their learning involves the utter forfeiture of all self-glory.

It would be hard—she could picture nothing harder; but even as her eyes sought the far-off heavens a soft and sudden peace stole over her troubled heart, and a voice seemed whispering through the rustling leaves, "Do thy duty now: hereafter shalt thou learn the wherefore."

CHAPTER XXIII.

ENDURING.

"I REALLY think," said Mrs. Levison complacently, "that Sheba has very much improved. She is not nearly as passionate or as wilful as she used to be. Her manners are better, too—more self-possessed and lady-like. If only she was a little more presentable!"

She sighed and looked across the table at her husband. Dinner was just removed, but they were lingering over the pleasant frivolities of dessert, and Mrs. Levison was ready to indulge in the confidential chit-chat her soul loved, and which to Sheba was unmitigated boredom.

Mr. Levison stretched out his legs under cover of his costly mahogany, and tossed off a glass of wine before answering his wife's observation.

"Improved?" he said. "Well, I'm glad you think so; I don't. She's as proud as Lucifer and as cold as an icicle. All she seems to care for is books and music. When she's not reading she's

strumming, or singing. Isn't it about time her education was finished? She's nearly seventeen, isn't she?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Levison; "I can't believe it. I can't fancy that I have a daughter grown up!"

Mr. Levison laughed a little grimly. Two years ago he might have fallen into the trap and made the expected rejoinder, as to the relationship appearing more sisterly than maternal—but that was two years ago.

"She certainly is grown up," he said. "You'll have to bring her out a little more this winter; she looks much older than she is."

"You needn't say that," said his wife pettishly, "or people will say I have been keeping her back. Society is always ill-natured."

Society—as Mrs. Levison called the compound mixture of rich Jews, wealthy business folk, and miscellaneous individuals of no particular status that made up her circle of acquaintances, to whose houses she went, and who in turn honoured her dinners and dances—was not at all ill-natured with respect to her, but she was pleased to think so. She liked to imagine herself an object of envy to persons who could not boast of descent from a good old English family; who had not so fine a house or smart a carriage, and, above all, knew not the glory of having a yearly box from England with the latest fashions in dress and millinery, with which she might adorn her comely person.

For things had gone very smoothly with the late Mrs. Ormastrod. Mr. Levison was very good-natured and let her have her own way in almost everything. His riches were always on the increase, and he denied her few things on which she had set her heart. On one point he had been firm, though, most unexpectedly firm, and that was in refusing to let Hex go to England and study for a profession as his mother had so ardently desired.

"Stuff and nonsense," he said, in answer to her entreaties; "the colonies are good enough for men of capital like me; they're good enough for young whipper-snappers like your son. There are too many people in the old country already. We'll keep what we've got here. The boy shall have a good commercial education and a good berth in my office as soon as he's old enough, and I'm sorry for him if he doesn't like his prospects. I only wish I had had such chances. I'd have been Premier now."

So Mrs. Levison after a good deal of fretting and grumbling, to which her new spouse paid not the smallest attention, gave up the project, for which Hex himself was not at all sorry. He had no brilliant gifts and he hated learning, so the thought of "exams" had not been a pleasant thought. He went to the best school in Sydney, and it is only fair to say, learnt as little as he possibly could, though he became a famous cricketer and oarsman.

With regard to Sheba, her resolutions of patience and forbearance

had been severely tested. Her step-father never liked her and they were constantly at variance. If she showed the smallest inclination to proceed in one way, her mother persistently pulled her back into another. It was her system of discipline, as she considered Sheba terribly self-willed. She had engaged a French master and a music master for her, and considered that was quite sufficient to "finish" her education. Girls ought not to know too much, it made them conceited. But Sheba's passion for books, tempered by Noel Hill's judicious hints for self-instruction, stood her in good stead, and Mr. Levison was only too pleased that she should make use of his really very creditable library, which was quite a white elephant to himself.

Those hours her mother spent in dressing, visiting and entertaining or being entertained, were always spent by the girl in close and earnest study.

Often and often she longed for Noel Hill's advice and assistance, but for the first year of her life in Sydney she never saw him though he frequently wrote to her. However, she had recently received from him the news that he had been appointed curate at St. Margaret's, Sydney, and was coming over almost immediately.

It was the satisfaction and glow of expectance raised by this letter, that had led to Mrs. Levison's remark as to Sheba's improved manners and disposition.

The prospect of introducing her daughter into what she termed "society" was not a pleasing prospect to Mrs. Levison. In the first place it would make her look old, and really with her easy-going life and her fashionable toilettes she was used to being complimented on her youthful appearance, and accustomed to consider herself as still on the safe side of that debatable ground, "middle-age."

But with a daughter as tall as herself, and of such stately manners and pronounced ideas, who looked quite twenty though she was not seventeen, what should she do? Australian girls, as a rule, were pretty and bright and lively, but Sheba had none of these attractions. No one in their senses, so Mrs. Levison decreed, would call that dark face, with its sombre flashing eyes, and coronet of hair, and proud set lips, pretty.

It was striking, and so in a way was the tall young form with its stately grace of movement, but then now-a-days people went in for brightness, audacity, *chic*, as Bessie Saxton called it, and Sheba possessed not one of these charms.

So she sat on there in her luxuriantly appointed dining-room and held forth to Mr. Levison on all these points, while he sipped his wine and thought complacently of the prospect of the next election at which he was almost sure to be returned, and paid no heed whatever to his wife's somewhat tautological discourse.

Meanwhile the object of that discourse was sitting by the wood-

fire in the library, listening half-amused and half-bored to the precocious chatter of Miss Dolly Levison.

That young lady had been thoroughly spoilt by her father, in whose eyes she represented all that was perfect, beautiful and clever in childhood. His wife having long since discovered that weakness of his, turned it to good account, and also petted and flattered the child in such a manner that her natural good qualities were fast disappearing, and she was developing into a pert forward little minx, who tyrannized over every one in the household except Sheba. She stood somewhat in awe of her, and in a way respected her because she was so uncompromising and so straightforward. She was a pretty child with dark saucy eyes and a cloud of fair hair about her shoulders, and a passion for bright colours and gaudy jewellery, probably inherited from her Semitic ancestors.

She had a bright scarlet frock on just now, and wore a coral necklace, and had a gold bracelet on her little plump arm. She was holding forth to Sheba on the glories of a child's party she had been to on the previous evening.

"No one had such a pretty dress as mine," she said complacently. "Mrs. Moss came up and asked who made it, and I told her it was a French dress, and had been sent out in mamma's last box, and Sarah Moss did look so cross. They have all their clothes made here, you know, by Miss Page, and she can't cut a skirt properly at all. Theirs hang like bags, and they will wear such big crinolines. You never wear crinolines at all, Sheba; but if you 'come out' this winter you will have to. Mamma says she won't go about with such a dowdy."

Sheba smiled a little. "Won't she; well, I'm afraid then I shan't come out at all. I certainly will never wear a crinoline. They're too hideous for anything; making every woman look like an inflated balloon."

"Well, you look quite as funny without one in your dresses," said Miss Dolly, tossing her fair crimped locks. "Whatever makes you go to that queer woman to have them made? Now at Clarke's in George Street you can get them very well done, and the Governor's family all go there."

"I like my dresses to be comfortable," said Sheba, "and Madame Toinette is an artist in her way. She is very poor, I know, and lives in a little back street, but for all that she has taste and skill, and she pleases me."

"I never saw any one who cared so little about dress as you do," went on the child, looking at her with curious eyes; "your mother *dreams* about it when she's going to have a new one. She takes days to decide on the trimmings and flounces, and you——"

"Have neither to decide about," laughed Sheba. "That is the best of having one's gowns always made the same way."

"But when you go to your first ball——" said Dolly.

"I am not going to any balls," the girl answered impatiently. "Dancing is a ridiculous way of wasting time, and time is a thing for which we shall all have to account. Our years are short enough, and when there is so much ignorance and distress in the world, it seems wicked to shut one's eyes to it and spend one's days in frivolous amusements which benefit no one."

"Oh, gracious!" cried Dolly, opening wide her own eyes, "you talk like a clergyman. Fancy not going to balls because other people in the world are in distress! I never heard anything so ridiculous. Catch me doing it! Why, I've thought out my first ball-dress already. I mean to wear white satin and pearls. I have always made up my mind to wear that ever since I read the description of the state ball at Buckingham Palace."

"I think if you were to read sensible books and learn your lessons, instead of studying dresses and shop windows, you would be all the better," said Sheba impatiently.

"I shall have plenty of money," said the child loftily. "I don't require to be clever."

"You will be a true daughter of Israel," answered Sheba with asperity. "Money—that is a fitting god for a race who once worshipped a golden calf! As far as my experience goes I can only say that rich people are odious—a mass of ostentation, vulgarity, and pretence. I would sooner have brains than riches any day!"

She rose from her seat as she spoke, and crossed the room to the bookcase. She had changed very much. She was tall and slender, and had a certain air of quiet dignity about her that stamped her every movement. She only wore a gown of some soft grey stuff, girded at the waist with an antique silver girdle; at her throat nestled a crimson rose, the only spot of colour that relieved the almost nun-like simplicity of her attire. Her hair in its glorious masses of dusky brown was coiled round her small well-shaped head; her face was still colourless, but had lost its old sallowness, and taken that clear olive tint which is essentially a brunette's charm.

No one could have looked at her without interest, though probably many would do so without admiration. Her eyes had even exceeded the promise of her childhood—they made her face remarkable at once—they were so large, so deep, so full of passionate life and eager thoughts. To look into them was to look into a human soul, and lose yourself in a maze of wonder as to what that repressed and ardent nature would make of life.

The girl's face itself was quiet almost to repression, but her eyes were not to be schooled so easily. In their flash and fire the inner force of her nature spoke out, and told its own tale of rebellion, and its own longings for freedom.

"Are you going to read?" demanded the child pettishly.

"What can you find in books to be always reading them? I hate books—I always shall."

"You are a foolish little girl," said Sheba calmly, "and you don't know what you are talking about. Books are the food of the mind, just as meat is the food of the body."

"Why do you want to be clever?" asked the child, looking criticizingly at her. "Is it because you're not pretty? You're not, you know. Mamma always says so. You are so dark, and have such a bad skin. You ought to use pistachio-nut powder. She always does. I've seen her put it on. It makes her skin quite fair, though it does get greasy after a while, but it makes you look very nice while it lasts. All the Jewesses use it."

Sheba coloured. "I shouldn't think of using face powder," she said indignantly, "and my looks only concern myself. What do they signify?"

"They will help you to get married," said little Miss Precocity. "Don't you want to get married? All girls do. At the Moss's they are always talking about it, but Sarah and Leah will have money, and you won't. The money is all my papa's, and it will come to me, not to you. I heard him say so, and that's why you ought to get married. I think you had better try the pistachio-nut powder."

"I think you had better go to bed," said Sheba sharply, as she turned her back on her little tormentor, and opened her book in hopes that the hint might be taken.

Miss Dolly turned up her little pert nose with scorn. "Indeed, I shall do no such thing. I'm going to wait till they come in from dinner. I want papa to take me to the opera to-morrow night; it's the first night. The company have just arrived from Melbourne, and I want to see the great tenor, Signor Riola. Every one is talking about him. They say he has such a lovely voice. Papa must take me. Wouldn't you like to go? You've never been to the opera yet."

"Yes, I should like to go very much," said Sheba eagerly.

"Oh, well, I'll ask him to take us both," said the young chatterbox. "That's why I'm waiting till after dinner; he's always good-tempered then, especially if he's had that brown sherry, and I told James to be sure and give him that this evening."

"What is the name of the opera?" asked Sheba.

"The 'Prophet,' and I saw a picture of it, a whole lot of people skating on the ice. It was lovely. I wonder what ice is like, real ice, or snow either. I mean to go to England one day and see. Oh, here *is* papa. What a red face he's got. I'm sure he's in a good temper!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE "PROPHET."

WHAT an enchantment there is about the very first experience of any special thing.

It is brief—brief as the hue of the rainbow, the bloom of the grape, the sparkle of the dew—but its brevity does not make it any the less beautiful or divine to the untired eye, and the untried heart, of youth.

To Sheba no time in her life, before or after this night, had ever, or could ever, hold such magic moments. Anticipation thrilled her with its possible wonders. The stir and flutter of life around her, the beautiful building, the crowds of people, the perpetual noise and movement in the orchestra, were all part and promise of something better yet in store for her. Of music, in its highest and greatest forms, she knew very little, neither had she any very specific talent for it, but any melody that touched her heart, or appealed to her fancy, was capable of giving her the keenest delight and affecting her with the most intense excitement.

Her cheeks burned like fire, her great deep eyes shone and glowed with a wonderful light as the crashing chords of the overture fell on her ear. She became utterly oblivious of everything and every one around her; an emotion, so strong it was almost pain, thrilled her heart, and the music seemed to speak to her of great and vague and wonderful things, to which, as yet, she could give no name.

Then slowly the curtain drew up, and she felt herself watching breathlessly as it were the unfolding of a drama. The book in her hand had explained to her the plot and action of the opera, and after a time she grew accustomed to the incongruity of seeing people acting and moving to music, and setting their sentiments and sensations into various rhythms and changing vagaries of "tempo."

Then suddenly a stillness seemed to fall on the crowded house, and she heard a voice ring out clarion-like above all other voices. She was dimly conscious that a face was looking at her from amidst flashing lights and moving figures, and that as it so looked, and as the clear, rich notes rang out, something familiar and remembered struck suddenly on her heart, and for a moment it seemed to stand still as with the pain of a great shock.

Then it leaped within her breast as if endowed with new, warm life. She felt glad and startled all in one, as she watched that stately grace of motion and listened to that wonderful voice. For before her she saw again the stranger whom she had found half-

dying by the Koonga waterfall nearly three years before. She wondered if he would see her—if he would remember Then she felt the blood dye her face with sudden shame even as she thought it. Why should he? What had she done for him after all?—and she had been only a child then. Everything before her grew dim and confused; she lost all sense of what she was looking at; she only thought of that autumn day—she only saw the foam of the falling waters—and stretched helpless at her feet the figure of a wounded man.

Then the curtain fell; there was a tumult of applause; loud cries and shouts filled the house—the curtain was swept aside, and alone, and looking straight at her across the footlights, was that remembered face. His eyes, as they swept across the eager, excited crowd, flashed suddenly on hers. She saw him start and move a step forward, then recovering himself he bowed and drew back, and again the curtain fell.

The blood rushed in a warm swift tide to Sheba's brow.

"He has not forgotten," she thought in her heart, and even as she thought it, wondered why that heart should feel so glad.

She seemed like one in a dream. She sat quite motionless in that second row of the parquet—her hands clasped, the colour glowing like a rose in her cheek, her great eyes dilated and full of liquid fire. The music thrilled her, the voices and movement and action of the great opera were like the unfolding of a new experience; but that stately figure in its white robes and with all the tragedy of a doomed life foreshadowing it like a melancholy fate, appealed to her as nothing else appealed, entranced her as nothing else entranced. It was a living, breathing reality to her from first to last.

From time to time his eyes met hers. She little knew how that absorbed face, those dark, passionate glowing eyes touched him as he looked at them, set in a crowd of other faces. How they puzzled and allured him, like some memory that escapes just as we are about to grasp it. For he recognized nothing of the little bush girl who had saved his life, in this slender white figure with its eloquent face and marvellous eyes. But those eyes touched him and inspired him, and he sang to them, and not to the idle, curious crowd around, and when again and again they called him back, and the great space rang with his name, it was still to that one face he looked and in which he read his best reward.

Then for the last time the curtain fell, and it seemed to Sheba Ormatroyd as if all the world had grown mute and dark and empty.

The whole night long she heard that grand music—she saw that one face in its love, its triumphs, its despair. All her thoughts seemed merged into a vague emotion, and she alter-

nated between the intensity of sorrow, and the exquisite visions of imagined joy.

He seemed to her as a being from another world, as something great and gifted beyond all mere humanity. In her ignorant, youthful, fanciful soul, the fact of his being set apart to interpret that masterpiece of genius seemed to give him a place of standing such as no man could lightly acquire. He was a king in his way, a king by might of genius, and as such she worshipped him reverently and afar.

That she might ever meet him apart from his mimic throne, ever speak to him or hear him speak, as on that day when first their lives had crossed, did not occur to her. That singing of his seemed to throb in the air and to echo in her heart, until all the darkness of the night grew glorious with its sounds, and it seemed to her that life could never be wholly sad or hard again if only sometimes she might see that face, and hear that divine voice. Thoughts and emotions like these robbed her of sleep, and at last she grew impatient of tossing to and fro on her pillow, and rose and dressed herself, and opening her window, looked out on the cool fresh beauty of the early day. Fleecy white clouds were drifting overhead; the sunshine broke slowly forth from amber mists, and all the sky grew clear and radiant.

Sheba turned suddenly away from the window and seized her hat, and then softly opened her door and went down the stairs and through the library into the verandah, and from there made her way with quick, elastic steps across the lawn and garden, and in a few minutes was out on the Sydney road.

It was very early, barely five o'clock, and they never breakfasted till nine or half-past nine, so Sheba resolved to walk to the Domain, which was about three miles distant and a favourite resort of hers.

The Domain is the Hyde Park of Sydney, but a park where nature has done infinitely more than art. Tropical plants flourish luxuriantly all the year round, magnificent trees tower proudly over lawns and flower-beds, and winding walks, and varied foliage of perfumed shrubs.

It was so early that Sheba seemed to have it all to herself, and she chose the less frequented walks and alleys, and her buoyant young feet bore her along with that swift and easy grace that comes from unimpeded freedom of limb, and perfect health and youth.

Insensibly the fresh air and the swift exercise calmed the excitement under which she had laboured for all those hours. Her step grew slower, she clasped her hands behind her—a trick of hers when walking alone—and half unconsciously her lips broke into the melody of that beautiful air from the "*Prophet*," where John of Leyden proclaims his mission to the people, and which she had heard for the first time on the previous evening.

As she was softly singing it to herself, she turned the corner of one of the dusky alleys and doing so came suddenly face to face with some one advancing from the opposite direction.

She paused involuntarily, her hands dropped, her startled eyes looked back at two other eyes—laughing, interrogative—that flashed with something of her own surprise, and her own recognition.

She saw before her the singer at the opera the previous night. He had a little child perched on his shoulder, a fair-haired, beautiful little creature with great solemn grey eyes, and Sheba in a moment seemed to take in the likeness between them, even as the tall stately figure stepped back with a murmured apology and a keen interrogative glance.

"Pardon me, but have we not met before?" he said with an easy deferential grace that struck Sheba as altogether different to her previous experience of men's manners. "I saw you last night at the opera, and I felt sure I had seen you and spoken to you somewhere, but I could not recollect where. If I am mistaken——"

"No," said Sheba colouring shyly, "you are not mistaken; it was at the Koonga waterfall—you had met with an accident."

He started; she saw his lips whiten suddenly. "How could I have forgotten?" he said. "Yes, it was you who saved my life—who——" He broke off abruptly and passed his hand across his eyes as if to shut out some horrible sight. "I was not very grateful to you for saving it," he went on, as he looked gravely at the girl's changing face. "I was in as miserable a plight as any human being could well be. Death was so near that it seemed I might have as well taken the one step more to reach it."

"You should be grateful now that you did not," said Sheba involuntarily, "now you are so great, so famous."

He looked at her as if in wonder, then a smile broke over his face. "Famous," he said, "oh, no, I am only a poor singer. May I ask what time you came into the opera house last night?"

"Just as the orchestra had commenced the overture."

"Oh," he said, "I thought so; then you did not hear the apology for Riola. He was ill and I took his part. The manager was nearly distracted. . . . I don't believe he imagined I was capable of doing it; but I got through it very well, I flatter myself. At least, my master said so, and he has coached a good many singers in his time. It was really my first appearance, except in trifling things, though I have most operas at my fingers' ends. And the audience," he added laughing, "were not critical."

"I had never heard an opera before," said Sheba in a low dreamy voice. "I did not know it was possible for any human

voice to mean all that yours meant. I shall never forget it. I seem to know at last what music can be."

"If you loved it," he said, "as I do, you would say that one never quite knows *that*. There are depths and heights which it has not yet achieved. It is like a vista of infinite promise that lures us on and on, and at every step the visions grow more beautiful and more alluring, yet even as we grasp them, fade slowly away, to tantalize us with possibilities yet unachieved; but I mustn't let my hobby run away with me! I feel I have never yet properly expressed my sense of your courage and of my obligation. I have often thought of you; but the years have changed you so much, that you must forgive my not recognizing you at once."

"I did not expect it," said Sheba, the warm colour ebbing and flowing under her clear brown skin. "Still I am glad you should know I kept my promise."

His brow seemed to darken suddenly. He lifted the child down from his shoulder and set him on the ground.

"And I," he said, "have kept your handkerchief; though every time I looked at it, it brought back one of the darkest and worst hours of my life. It is odd we should meet like this—is it not?"

"Yes," she said simply. "But I always thought we would—some day. Is—that—your little child?" she added with some hesitation.

"Yes," he answered, looking down with sudden pride and tenderness at the quiet little face. "One thing saved out of a wreck of wasted feeling, and mis-spent passion."

"He is like you," said Sheba involuntarily; "but he looks very mournful; is he shy?"

"Not in the least; he will go to you if you desire—go and shake hands with the young lady, Paul," he added, laying his own hand lightly on the little fellow's shoulder.

The child advanced and held out his hand to Sheba, looking at her all the time with gravely solemn eyes that made her feel strange and shy. She took the little hand, but did not stoop to kiss the child as would have seemed natural in an ordinary introduction. Glancing up, she met his father's eyes; again the colour flushed her cheek.

"So you think he looks mournful?" he said. "He is very quiet and old-fashioned, and does not make friends readily. He has always been with me ever since he was a baby, so I suppose that is the reason. But shall we walk on? It is cold standing here."

He turned, and with the child clinging to his hand, walked beside Sheba in the direction she had been taking when they met.

That there was anything strange or unconventional in his doing

so, never occurred to the girl. It had all come about so naturally and so easily; there was nothing to cavil at in his manner or greeting, and he talked to her now as an old friend might have talked, until it seemed to her that he could not possibly be one and the same with that majestic white-robed prophet, who had enthralled all hearts and ears the previous night.

Quite lightly and easily he took up the dropped threads of their last meeting and wove them into the story of his after experiences. They had been somewhat adventurous, and lightly as he dwelt on them, his descriptions were graphic enough to enchant Sheba's vivid fancy. He had been to the gold diggings at Ballarat, and had a continuous run of ill-luck; but amongst the many strange specimens of all grades of humanity to be found in those regions, he had come across a German professor, who in a sudden attack of gold-fever had left his native land and never ceased to regret it.

"This man," he said lightly, "kept alive my one talent—if I may so call it, and it is to him I owe my success last night. I had always sung—I think I inherited a voice from my mother, who was herself an Italian opera singer—but he taught me what was far more important than mere vocalization. When he left the diggings and went to Melbourne, he took an engagement in the orchestra of one of the leading theatres, and I, to please him, studied music as an art and gained a living by teaching it—as a penance. A short time ago a large company came over from England to give performances of Italian opera, and some of them who had only minor parts, took it into their heads to decamp and visit the diggings. This was my opportunity. My friend and teacher introduced me to the manager, and when he heard me sing he at once engaged me. I under-studied Rialo, the tenor; and hence my appearance last night in Sydney in his part. He is still very ill, and to-night I appear in 'Trovatore,' and to-morrow in the 'Huguenots.' You should come to the 'Huguenots.' It is magnificent; some say it is Meyerbeer's finest work. For my part, I like John of Leyden, it suits me, and my old German taught me every bar of the music."

"Is he here in Sydney also?" asked Sheba.

"Yes, we lodge together. He is one of the first violins in the orchestra. Do you live in Sydney now? It was far enough away from there that I first met you."

"I came here nearly two years ago," said Sheba. "My mother married again, and we live at the Glebe now."

"I know it. It is a charming part; much prettier than the town. Do you like Australia—are you a native of it?"

"Yes," she said, "I was born here, but my parents are English. And you are English, are you not?"

His brow clouded suddenly. "Yes," he said briefly, "I have not told you my name yet, have I? The truth is, I have chosen

to sink my identity under another—for—special reasons. I am known in the company only as Paul Meredith. Probably, if I make a hit, I shall have to turn it into Italian, and inform the public that I am Signor Somebody; but at present I keep the English nomenclature, which is partly my own."

"And shall you be a singer always?" asked Sheba.

"I hope so. I like the life. It is triumph, labour, excitement, festival, all combined. Favour is capricious, but while it lasts it is a good life, and it is about all I am fit for."

"It is a great thing surely to be fit for it," said Sheba. "When I think of you last night holding all that multitude of people breathless——"

He laughed a little bitterly. "And if I died to-morrow not one of them would care," he said. "The fame of a singer lasts but with the breath of his songs, and there are always people to say the new voice eclipses the old. Who cares for the past summer when the glory of the present holds out its promise?"

"But the past," said Sheba timidly, "may have memories that make it sweeter and fairer than the promise of the present."

He looked at her gravely. "True; but public memory is not addicted to sentiment. Only to some rarely-favoured mortal here and there has it been given to reach a height where Fame sits for ever enthroned, and men cannot but see, and hear, and remember!"

Sheba looked suddenly at his face. His eyes were dreamy and absorbed, and gazed far away into the soft blue space of the cloudless heavens. "I think," she said softly, almost reverently, "you might reach it if you would."

His eyes turned to hers—again that look as of repressed pain crossed his face. "No," he said, "never. It is not for me. There is that in my life——"

He broke off abruptly. "I am getting egotistical," he said. "Never mind about my life, or my future. Let us rather talk about yourself and the strangeness of our meeting. I do not even know your name. It would scarcely do to call you by that one you told me of in the bush, for you are a grown-up young lady now."

Sheba laughed. "My name," she said, "is Ormatroyd, but I think no one ever calls me that. I am always Sheba."

"I suppose even I shall always think of you by that name," he said. "And so you kept your promise that day. You told no one of your adventure."

"No one," she said. Then added timidly, "Was it really a fall? You have the mark still on your brow."

"It was not a fall," he said, and his brow darkened. "I was shot at, and left for dead. The traitor was one whom I had

trusted, aided, loved—more fool I! Never again in my life would I do that—never, never again!"

"Oh," said Sheba, "that sounds hard."

"It cannot sound," he said, "harder than my life has been made, ere ever I could say it."

(To be continued.)

TRAVELS IN LONDON

IN SEARCH OF THE PICTURESQUE.

By PERCY FITZGERALD, F.S.A.

PART VI.

DICKENS'S CONNECTION WITH LONDON.

THERE is ever a pleasing, yet painful, interest in tracing out the many residences of Dickens in London, each of which, according to its pretensions, seems to indicate the state of his fortunes at the period of his stay. Each, too, has a curious old fashion—like the costume in which the gifted writer was painted in his early days—and is in good and sound preservation.

When a bachelor, he lived in Furnival's Inn, on the right as we enter, but on his marriage he removed to 48, Doughty Street. In this clean little street there is a prim monotony, every house being of the same cast—small, and suited for a clerk and his family. They seem indeed miniature Wimpole Street houses; but have a snug, comfortable air, and it is something to pause before No. 48 and think of "Oliver Twist" and "Nicholas Nickleby," written in this study. With increasing prosperity he moved from this humble but snug quarter to a more pretension mansion, "Tavistock House," where he lived for ten years. "In Tavistock Square," says Hans Andersen, "stands Tavistock House. This and the strip of garden in front of it are shut out from the thoroughfare by an iron railing. A large garden, with a grass plat and high trees, stretches behind the house and gives it a countrified look in the midst of this coal and gas steaming London. In the passage from street to garden hung pictures and engravings. Here stood a marble bust of Dickens, so like him, so youthful and handsome; and over a bedroom door were inserted the bas-reliefs of Night and Day, after Thorwaldsen. On the first floor was a rich library, with a fireplace and a writing table, looking out on the garden; and here it was that in winter Dickens and his friends acted plays." Turning out of the road one is struck by the rather stately air of the mansion. During these ten years he made it re-echo with his gaiety and cheery spirit. It had, however, a damp or dampish air, which all edifices near Regent's Park seem

to contract. Later it became the residence of Mrs. Georgina Weldon, *née* the beautiful Miss Treherne. Her portrait by Watts shows what she was in the heyday of her attractions. Her fine voice and cultivated style drew many to the house; the rest of her strange history is now familiar to the public. It has now passed into the hands of some society or school.

Not far away is No. 1, Devonshire Terrace, a later residence of the novelist, where he wrote "*Master Humphrey's Clock*," "*David Copperfield*," and some other works. It is found near the Marylebone Road. This, too, is in an inclosure set back from the road, and was humorously described by its tenant as "a house of great promise (and great premium), undeniable situation and excessive splendour;" while it struck his friend Forster as "a handsome house with a garden of considerable size, shut out from the New Road by a brick wall, facing the York gate into Regent's Park."

In Gower Street is a house associated with some scenes in the boy Dickens's life, full of pain and misery. At No. 4 (as it was then) Mrs. Dickens set up a school, or tried to do so. Mr. Allbut has found that, owing to a change in the numbering, the house No. 145 is the former No. 4. It is a strange feeling to stand before No. 145 and recall his own disastrous, even tragic account of this early misery:—"A house was soon found at No. 4, Gower Street North; a large brass plate on the door announced Mrs. Dickens's establishment; and the result I can give in the exact words of the then small actor in the comedy, whose hopes it had raised so high: 'I left at a great many other doors a great many circulars, calling attention to the merits of the establishment. Yet nobody ever came to school, nor do I recollect that anybody ever proposed to come, or that the least preparation was made to receive anybody. But, I know that we got on very badly with the butcher and baker; that very often we had not too much for dinner: and that at last my father was arrested.' Almost everything by degrees was pawned or sold, little Charles being the principal agent in these sorrowful transactions until at last, even of the furniture of Gower Street, No. 4, there was nothing left except a few chairs, a kitchen table and some beds. Then they encamped, as it were, in the two parlours of the emptied house, and lived there night and day."

This connection of Dickens with London is more profoundly intimate than would be supposed, and goes far beyond mere vivid and accurate description of localities. It is impossible not to feel that he pierced to the heart and spirit of the old buildings and streets, and this we feel instinctively by recalling his accounts of such places as now survive, of which there are unhappily but too few. It was thus that Victor Hugo seemed to interpret the old cathedral of Notre Dame. To give a slight instance of this sense of expression, which defies the uninspired observer, who yet instantly feels

its truth, we might take such streets as Wimpole Street, of which Sidney Smith gave the happy interpretation that "every thing has an ending, even Wimpole Street," and Harley Street with its peculiar oppressive monotony. Every one has felt this, yet who could express it so well?

With such a guide the old streets and houses long since demolished and being fast demolished every day, revive before us; with them rises the old-fashioned London, its humours, its society, of fifty years ago. One of the results of this association is that as we walk through some of these old-world quarters, such as Goswell Street or "Lant Street, Boro'," (where Bob Sawyer gave his party), the whole *Pickwick*, or rather Dickens flavour seems to pour out, and the figures live again. It is not surprising that this connection between the gifted writer and the old bricks of London should have become a study, and a very engaging study, and in antiquarians' accounts of the great city it is now become customary to trace the haunts and localities of the places described in his novels. In an unpretending but lively little book Mr. Allbut has undertaken this labour of love and furnished a very useful little handbook to the Dickens explorer. From this one might profitably glean a few passages. It will be noted what a poetical instinct the great writer had in this respect, and he caught the true "note" as it were of making selection of what was best fitted for his purpose. This power of vividly imprinting the locality on the mind might be illustrated by that dismal gate and alley, "Tom's all alone," of which the site only remains in Bedfordbury, just out of Chandos Street, where the huge Peabody Buildings rise, though it has been claimed for other localities. Indeed close to the upper end of Shaftesbury Avenue there is a strange forlorn alley with a dilapidated tottering old inclosure beyond, which would exactly serve for the original. And in Russell Court, that curious winding passage leading to the pit door of "Old Drury," we may still see the gate of the dismal burial ground, on whose step Lady Deadlock was found. It still looks exactly as in the print, "with houses looking on, on every side, save where a reeking little tunnel of a court gives access to the iron gate." This depressing intramural burial ground has been garnished up into a recreation inclosure, and is but a trifle less gloomy than a cheerful mortuary house being built at one side.

In "*Pickwick*" it will be recollected how Mr. Perker's clerk had to be fetched from a tavern in Clare Market, at the back of New Inn, and the "George the Fourth" seems to answer accurately to this description, more particularly as it used to be, and may be still, a place of convivial resort. It is strange to think how Mr. *Pickwick* without scruple sat down here in the cosy parlour to have his tumbler and listen for an hour and more to the stories of the old Inns, Dane's, Clement's and New, and by which he was surrounded. "In the lower windows, which were decorated with curtains of a

colony, every street and house laid out after fixed designs and with infinite variety, and suited to every size of purse. The surprising part is that this should have been designed specially, and should not have grown up by degrees, a tract of land having been bought and laid out in very pleasing fashion, with houses and gardens of the more modern pattern.

Lambeth was perhaps the last London quarter which retained this antique and picturesque air. Up to a few years ago a careless walk revealed all kinds of curious and interesting houses. Then seven or eight years ago there was to be seen in South Lambeth Road the house of the Tradescants, with a charming little park round it, which was the first Botanic Garden established in England, while in the house the Ashmolean Museum was first exhibited. This has now been swept away; the "jerry builder" has been hard at work, and has covered it with brick terraces. With Lambeth is associated a curious legend known as that of "Pedlar's Acre," a term familiar, but of unknown or indistinct meaning. This painted window represented a pedlar and his dog, and the story handed down was that a pedlar had left his bit of land to the church, on condition that this memorial was preserved. It is certain, whether this tale be an ower true one or not, that a piece of land hard by Westminster Bridge, held by a poor artisan, which was originally worth four shillings an acre, now brings in over £1,000 a year. Many years ago the pedlar and his dog was removed to make way for a brand new window in memory of a Mrs. Colambell and a Mrs. Basher, wives of a Lambeth doctor, who was clerk to the overseers. Unhappily in London there is no security whatever for the preservation of memorials, which may disappear any morning.

SOME OLD ALMSHOUSES.

WE would scarcely expect to find a lesson in art among the slums and squalid streets that lurk behind Victoria Street, Westminster, nor could we expect to light on much in the way of antique survival. Yet here we come on at least three interesting old edifices—almshouses and schools—which in their aspect and surroundings are a charming sort of surprise. Passing out of Victoria Street, where there is the crush and noise about "The Stores," down a small alley, we come to a little gem of its kind, as it will seem to the true artist, a small charity school, standing in its walled inclosure. It is of Queen Anne date and pattern, and is no more than a simple square little hall. But how quaint and varied is it; how are its surfaces broken, while every side offers a different pattern. The honest brick is of a fine plum colour; the wall is daintily divided by pilasters; delicate, unobtrusive cornices run around; the windows are shaped in proportion, and the doorways are of such extraordinary elegance, it is difficult to decide between them.

The whole approach in front, the gateway and its piers, the flight of steps, the door itself—all strike as being the work of a tasteful artist. Over the door is the pleasantly rococo figure of “The Blew Coat Boy” in his niche. There is a little garden behind with steps leading down, and a sort of *dédendance* attached, similar in style, but acting as a sort of foil. There is a charm about the little unpretentious building that is extraordinary. Unhappily, it needs repair and restoration, though it is not dilapidated; no one, however, seems to care for it, and a builder has been allowed to construct a sort of “lean-to shed” beside it. By-and-by it is likely enough to pass away, and be swept off that coveted piece of ground. No one who appreciates the grace and charm of architecture can fail to admire it.

Passing by this interesting structure and making our way a little farther on in the direction of James Street, we come to a bit of almost rural life—a perfect picture, which few would suspect was to be found so close to these busy haunts of men. This is a group of old almshouses known as Lady Dacre’s—a large square, covered on three sides by the buildings. They are exactly of the pattern that would have delighted the late Frederick Walker, and might be found in the outskirts of some old country town. In front there is a high railing of good old iron with a handsome gateway in the middle. Through the rails we can see the forlorn garden offering an air of “large desolation” and neglect, with a look of tranquil abandonment. The centre of this low block of buildings has a quaint cupola, or lantern rising from a pediment filled with decayed sculptures. At the side are two pretty little gates by which you can enter and walk round, and play “the contemplative man,” past the low doorways, over which are faint characters with the name of a parish. A dim-faced clock gives hoarse and wheezy note of time; but there is no one to be seen.

Retracing our steps and crossing Victoria Street by “The Stores,” we pass into Rochester Row. Near the Westminster end we come to a large old house of a delightful pattern, with vast inclosed gardens or grounds behind. This is the “Grey Coat” School, with a fine tiled roof, and central block with wings. Nothing can be better than the rare solid brick work—the air of comfort. Some directing Goths have, however, erected a barbarous sort of colonnade or passage exactly before the door of entrance, thus spoiling the effect of the façade. Everything is in excellent keeping, even to the high substantial wall round it. But the fair expanse of ground behind is coveted, and already a slice has been taken off for a large factory.

In front there used to stand, not long since, another group of almshouses, which the worthy Palmer and Enery Hill, erst citizens of Westminster, had erected. These were pulled down, and an attempt has been made to erect something of the same *genre*, but with indifferent success. Cheap, economical brick work on Queen

Anne lines does not answer, and soon acquires a mean, squalid air owing to the amount of mortar used. Taken as they are, we must be grateful that these relics are left to us. These are certainly the best things of the kind to be found in London, and the lover of what is picturesquely antique will not find this little promenade unprofitable.

With this *bonne bouche* I conclude, for the present, my "Travels," and take my leave.

THE END.

AUNT JANE'S RELICS.

By MARY BATHURST DEANE,

AUTHOR OF "S. BRIAVELS," "UNFORGIVEN," ETC.

THERE lie before me as I write a pile of faded morocco pocket-books, red, green, and brown, tied with ribbons to match. A little over a century ago "Aunt Jane" wrote her name in good round hand in the first of them. Some were given to her by "mama" some by "papa," others by "my aunt Zinzan." Had the daily record of her life been kept less fitfully, and more fully, we should have what could not fail to be interesting, a complete history of a young lady in her teens, showing what had changed, and what had not changed in English country life since the pleasant family party, long since laid to rest, gathered about the wood fires of Hartley Court, or rode through the streets of Reading.

And even as it is I could not help thinking that, aided by oral tradition and surrounded by objects that would if they could tell the whole story, I might put together a sketch of this family life that should carry with it some interest to those who desire to know something of the way in which their predecessors lived.

It was the old and not the modern world in which Jane, her brothers and sisters lived—a world less crowded than the present one, and a great deal less noisy. We look beyond the vast forces that have taken possession of it since then, and get a glimpse of a calm rural life that seems like a haven of peace on the further side of a huge barrier of shrieking, tearing, whirling, rushing machinery. Here is a land threaded with electric intelligence, riddled with railway lines, showered with a white incessant fall of penny and half-penny postage, a world running to and fro, and eager to hear and to tell the last new thing.

There—jogged along the rumbling coaches, the horn blown perhaps for a couple of letters franked by members of Parliament, and three which cost the recipients at least eightpence a piece. Books issued slowly from the press, advertisements were unknown, the vast majority of the population stayed on the spot where they were born, feared the Pope, and looked up to the parson and squire. Very good times were those for parson and

squire, but for the people, England had long ceased to be "Merry England." Persecution of Church and State, begun by Tudors, carried on by Puritans, had stripped away every flower and fruit of mirth and left a reeling drunken population. Whoso can put two and two together will find it writ clear in the pages of English history.

The sharp-witted, eager, observant mechanic had not been called into existence. The peasants were as children—naughty children chiefly—but to be fed and treated and ruled indulgently by private benevolence, to be pressed for the navy, or India, and to be hanged for stealing forty shillings. Laws were too often horrible ghastly tyrannies to the poor. The champions of the weak, the giant-killers, were only just beginning the most glorious campaigns of the world.

The family of my heroine, who was a Berkshire beauty in her day, was not fast rooted to one spot, though never straying far without the bounds of that pleasant county.

The pocket-books are dated from Hartley Court, which, however, was never a favourite residence of Jane's father; or from the old house in the Forbury, Reading, which stood within what had once been the garden of the old Abbey, whose picturesque ruined gateway was part of their property. They had also a house at Hythe, near Southampton, where the yacht "Eliza" was kept.

Jane's father was of a type which England can no longer afford to cultivate—a product too expensive to himself and to others. Suave, brilliant in conversation, a good classical scholar, a man of witty sayings and bright epigrams, a leader in local politics whose influence could return at least one of the members; a descendant of county families, and county families only; a keen sportsman; an authority in agricultural matters, being one of the founders of the Bath and West of England Agricultural Society,—a "three-bottle" man, and a gambler! Look at the old county histories, and compare the names of the landowners with those in the chronicles of to-day. The old order changes without any revolution to precipitate matters; the old names die out and new ones succeed. The slow wheel of fortune brings the descendant of the Saxon serf to sit in the place of the ruined Norman. The Saxon is re-conquering England, because of the gambling houses, the race-course, and the three-bottle sittings of Georgian squires. The prodigal groweth lean and the diligent fat—facts patent in each generation to Jew and Gentile.

There existed, until the worm nibbled at it, a black and gold oval frame containing seven miniatures. These represented the father and mother, with their five children, of whom "Aunt Jane" was number two. The five children bore five plain old-fashioned names, Ann, Jane, John, Robert, and "Betsy." Boys and girls alike have their brown locks cut straight across the forehead and hanging loose to their shoulders. The girls are arrayed in spotted

muslin frocks, with gauze mob caps decked with white flowers and ribbon. Little Betsy, in the middle, has a blue sash, and has not attained to the dignity of a cap. The boys are in nankin suits, braided about the fronts; both wear frilled lawn collars, and the younger has a blue silk sash tied over his coat. It must have been severe discipline to Master Robert, who was a pickle of the old sort, to have to endure much fragile smartness. There is another portrait of John, in oils, a nice grave-faced boy, in his Eton Montem dress, a scarlet coat, his hair in powder, with the towers of Eton in perspective.

Three of the five were destined to see very far-off lands before they ran out the last coil of the strand spun for them; but it is Jane who stopped at home, and did nothing, only waited and was patient, only suffered and made no complaint, only lived through a long quiet spoiled life as thousands of other women have done, around whom the warmest memories seem to cling.

There is so little in those faded pocket-books of hers, that they recall but a shadow of the merry life that by-and-by was swept into dark rain-clouds; and yet it brings back a bit of real living, laughing, careless existence, a sheltered English home of the days when just across the Channel, the old order was being done away and the fire of the great Revolution being blown into flames. In the year 1784 there was a burst of rude laughter throughout the House of Commons, at the notion of a prime minister of twenty-four, but that was the last time the name of "William Pitt" was received with hilarious scorn.

Jane's father was a friend of the new premier, and she was brought up on political talk of the most intensely partisan nature. No house in those days was wide enough to hold two opinions.

In February Jane, who was then thirteen, states that she went to the "County Meeting, and signed the address." She does not mention what the important matter was which demanded a signature fresh from copy-book practice. She also "drank tea and *suped* with my aunt Matthias. Whent to church twice." It is perfectly sure that the excellent Miss Springett, who ruled in the schoolroom, did not look over her pupil's diary.

"I won my bet with my uncle Matthias, 2s. 6d. Bought an orange. Mama gave me an orange, 1½d." This refreshment must have been supplied when they were shopping in Reading. "For mending papa's stockings, 6d." That was a well-earned sixpence, for "papa's stockings" were long enough to roll up above the knee of a man six foot high, thick lustrous ribbed silk; and "papa" was terribly particular.

On a Thursday Jane and her sisters "took a ride in the chariot with Miss Springett;" on Friday, "took a ride in the chaise with mama and Ann. Drank tea with Mrs. Andrewes, and spent a very agreeable evening."

"Mama gave me sixpence for behaving well. Played at cards and won 2s."

"Had a good deal of company. Lost 9d. at cards."

"Bought an orange 1½d. Payed Mrs. Henip for washing a tucker and pair of robings. Cards as usual."

Either the schoolroom ~~was~~ not permitted a share in the feast of good things detailed in the clear small writing of Jane's grandmother, through two vellum-bound volumes, or Jane had a passion for tarts not to be appeased by home cookery, for the next series of entries, with an arbitrary system of capital letters, is as follows:—"Tarts 2d.; Ribbon 1½d.; tarts 2d.; a doll 3d.; a grate for Betsy."

The wooden doll whose humble cost was 3d. had doubtless a long thin waist and painted fringe of hair; a few years later the waist was cut just below the arm-pits, and the fringe was curly. There was one of these eighty years later among old Aunt Jane's relics. Dolls always lag a trifle behind the fashions, but with an attempt to keep up with the *beau monde*.

Jane next records that she "went to dancing," and that "papa and Mrs. Neville came home from London."

"Went with Mrs. Andrewes to see the Nomination for the county."

"Colonel Vansittart (the Tory candidate) dined here."

Then in triumph, "Colonel Vansittart and Mr. Pye gained their election." "Mr. Vansittart and Mr. Ravenshaw dined here."

There was a lingering memory of times when a standing army was looked upon as a national danger in the way in which military titles were used, or omitted, as fancy dictated.

Jane next records that she spent 2d. on a "bow and arrow," and 1d. on some "gum ariaback," also that she stayed at home all day and was "very indifferent."

"Mr. Cobham and Colonel Stewart drank tea and spent the evening at our house."

A few years later, when Colonel Stewart had become a general, and Jane's elder sister Ann was seventeen, this gentleman was possessed with the mistaken idea that she would make him a suitable wife. He had considerable property, and her father was of his opinion also. Ann, however, thought very differently, but after a great deal of pressing for her objections, declared that she had but two. "Perhaps," suggested the general, "they might be overcome." "That was unfortunately impossible," said the young lady. He persisted. "Then, if you will know, sir—you are too old and too ugly." For this daring impertinence Ann was locked up, on rations of bread and water, but owing to the good nature of the general, or to the charm of manner to which a gentleman, afterwards a peer and prime minister, succumbed, the naughty girl was forgiven, and in after years General Stewart

gave his name and promised his fortune to a son of hers, who, however, died of small-pox, in his childhood, in India.

The little diary runs on, "Took a walk early in the morning, with 'Rush,' C. Howe, and Ann. Went to the cow to drink milk. Mr. Abercromby dined. Took a ride with papa, Mr. Abercromby, and John. Gave John 1s., Robert 6d., Pattiman 2d. Drank tea in the summer-house."

She paid a visit in London after this, but tells nothing about it.

She must have been in the country again, when she writes. "Rode on horseback with papa and Taylor." "Taylor dined with us." "Taylor went to Westminster."

In these bald statements lies the germ of the long and sole romance of Jane's life. Charles Taylor was a son of a well-known physician at Reading; a friend of her brothers, as one can see by his being called "Taylor" by her. In the Eton and Westminster holidays they were much together, a juvenile friendship of which no one foresaw the consequence.

Ann and Jane were more of horsewomen than girls at that date usually were, and many a long ride was stored up in Jane's memory, with other such passing sweet recollections, to shed light upon the grey lonesome years that closed quietly upon her afterwards. But now all is Maytime, youth "playing on a bank of sunny flowers;" no one looks beyond "next holidays," and the ruin to be brought by "papa's" visits to London, his nights at "Arthur's," is looming far in the distance.

In the pocket-book for 1784 is a list of the tunes for country dances, already altered from their original meaning, *contre-danse*. To these sprightly airs figured the maidens in sprigged muslins and gauze caps, the powdered youths in knee breeches, and paste buckles.

The handsome and gallant dragoon who became the husband of saucy Ann rode seventy miles on one horse, in order to dance an evening through with her at a Reading "Assembly." This lover, who, like young Lochinvar, was "gallant in war, and constant in love," was more fortunate than another dragoon—the Charles Taylor of Westminster School—having fortune to back him in his suit; and his wooing went as gaily as the fiddles in the Reading ball-room, which twanged out the strains of "The Pleasures of Sproughton," "Prince William's Return," "Miss Bethell's Fancy," "Le Pulley's Whim," "The Attic Storey," "The Oakes Assembly," "The Enchanted Wood," "The Happy Meeting," "Lady Townsend's Fancy," "The Blazing Comet," "Prince of Wales' Delight."

Jane copies from a pack of fortune-telling cards a couplet, which doubtless struck her as a valuable bit of philosophizing:

"Were you to get your own intent,
In a short time you would repent."

At the end of the year she writes. "First Christmas that ever I dined without papa." That charming individual, for whom she ever retained a deep admiration, was detained in town. Every night in town meant a fresh cantle out of the family fortune.

1776 begins with quotations from Addison and winnings at cards, in friendly proximity; also she records a visit in the coach to Aunt Zinzan, who presented her with "a crown-piece for a keepsake."

"Madam Zinzan" was a noted character in Reading. The old red-brick house, standing in gardens, from which she started every morning for the eight o'clock service at St. Mary's, in her double-caped cloak and pattens, with her maid carrying a lantern, has given place to "Zinzan Street," and "Zinzan Place." The family bearing that foreign name came first into England from Italy, in the reign of Henry VII. The representatives of it held some place about court throughout six reigns, and were entrusted with certain foreign missions. Among the scanty relics of their possessions is a fine portrait of Sir Sigismund, who was equerry to James I., and taught Prince Henry tilting; one of his son Henry, and another of the son's Dutch wife, Jacoba van Lore; also some fine damask table-cloths, bearing the royal cypher and crown of Henry VII. Upon one of these is portrayed the story of the prodigal son, the costumes in the early Tudor style, the swine large and well fed. Another, with napkins to match, was woven in honour of Prince Eugene, and shows forth Joshua commanding the sun to stand still. Tylehurst, in Berkshire, was the seat of the Zinzans until the reign of Charles II., when the head of the family was a boy of seventeen. It happened that some Italian workmen were employed in the hall, and on one unlucky day the heir and his mother were together, watching their proceedings and giving orders. Tradition does not say whether by misunderstanding or undue interference, or sheer impertinence, but one of these workmen affronted the lady, whereupon the boy drew his dagger and plunged it into the offender's breast. The blow was fatal, and the young heir was sent out of the country in all haste by his affrighted mother. She herself, poor lady, went to beg the king's pardon, but was told that it could not be granted before trial, so fearing to stand a trial, the young man never returned to England.

Out of the Zinzan vault in St. Mary's Churchyard grows a willow, completely overshadowing the grim altar tomb, and there sleeps Madam Zinzan, the last of that branch of the family, a *grande dame*, a Lady Bountiful, and one who expected to be much made of. This last trait was well known to her young grand-nieces.

Ann writes to Jane from Mr. Sclater's, Tangier Park :

"DEAR JANE,

"I hope to receive a letter from you to-morrow by the newsman. We have rode out every afternoon but yesterday. When we were ready to go, one of Mr. Sclater's cows gored Miss Sclater's horse, so that she could not ride him, and he is so old they are affraid he will not recover. I asked the horse doctor this morning how Dash was, and he says he mends a little. We dined at Mr. Mackreth's on Thursday last, and spent a most agreeable day. We went to Basingstoke on Tuesday, and as we were riding by Mrs. Chambers', I saw my grandmama and Mrs. Basnet. We got off our horses, and I went with my grandmama to the Maidenhead Inn, where my aunt Zinzan was. She told me that she had been to Southampton, and that did not agree with her, so she went on to Limington. I suppose that agreed very well, for there she met some of her friends, and was taken notice of . . . I have finished my purse as mama desired, as much as I can do myself, and have sent it home in case my Aunt H. D. should come. Would be obliged to Miss Springett to finish it for me; also to mama, to present it to my aunt in my name, if I have not the pleasure of seeing her. Miss Sclater has lost a young Guinea fowl, and is now a-hunting for it. She has just been in to tell me to say that we agree very well, and are not tired with one another's company. I see William is just gone to saddle our horses to go to church. Miss Sclater rode a new horse to-day, and it carried her very well. I beg my duty, and Mr. and Miss Sclater's compliments to papa and mama, and love to you, Betsy, and my brothers. Adieu!

"Your affectionate sister

"ANN."

"I have just received your letter safe, and am much obliged to you for it. Tell mama that my yellow petticoat is full of little holes, and the stain shows through my frock quite frightful, and if she will let me have my white one to wear under my frock, I will only wear it when Miss Sclater tells me, as she is to have a Mrs. Russell to spend a day with her, who is a genteel dressy lady."

Dated October 30th, 1784, is a letter from Jane to a young friend of hers at Andover, the daughter of Sir Harvey Coombe. Jane was just thirteen.

"DEAR MISS COOMBE,

"As you were so obliging to answer my last letter, I could not let our correspondence drop through, though I fear my scrawl affords you but little pleasure. The lecture you gave Ann in your last has prevailed on her to write. My aunt Matthias gave us the account of her journey, with real pleasure. I should have

wrote before, but waited for an opportunity of sending it. I am sorry to find that you are still such a strong friend to Mr. Fox, but hope when we have the pleasure of seeing you at Reading, we shall be all of the same opinion in politics, as I flatter myself it is the only thing we differ in. Now dear Miss Coombe, I must conclude, with love, and compliments from papa and mama, sisters and self,

"I remain your sincere and affectionate friend

"JANE."

The following letters were written to Jane, in the year 1785, when she was staying at Tangier Park:

"DEAR JANE,

"Being at my aunt Zinzan's this afternoon, my grand-mama desired I would write a few lines for her in answer to your last, with which she was much pleased, as was your aunt Zinzan. As for the excursion into Hampshire, it must be put off for a little while, as my aunt's coach is at the coachmaker's to be painted. You will hear further about it before they come. It is a chance whether I come or not. If I do, we shall sleep at Basingstoke. Papa will dine at the Aldermaston Club on Tuesday, from whence he talks of coming to Tangier. Mr. Fowler dined with us on Monday, and after dinner he and Mr. Sclater, Ann, and Charlotte Stowe, and myself took a long ride on horseback.

"Drury's horse is quite blind, so it is impossible to ride that one, but I have a most delightful one now, which belongs to my uncle Matthias. I am working Betsy's frock body in pleats, and to each pleat a row of pinstitch. It is almost finished, but is monstrous tiresome.

"I have begun a little caddy in fillagree work, under the direction of Miss Sturges, who has just finished one, which is vastly admired. I have learnt a new hunting song of Miss Roebuck, who is now at the Stowes, and whom I like vastly. Our harpsichord is new tuned by a man from London, and is done very well indeed. I believe I was about the outline of Coker-mouth Castle when you left us; it is now finished and I am doing one for its companion; when done, papa talks of sending them both to Mr. Garforth, the member for Cokermouth. Now I must conclude, as the tea-things are waiting for me to make tea."

In her next letter Ann sends a copy of verses, whose ambitious author was doubtless known to her sister. Having described them as "very pretty," underlined, Ann feels she has committed herself, and carefully scratches out the words, replacing them with strict propriety, with "the following" verses. They are given

as a specimen of the lines turned out by the aspiring youth of the day :

“ The circling year again brings forth
The happy day which gave to Nancy birth,
May the propitious morn, with lustre rise,
And find thee still more happy and more wise.
May heaven guard thee with distinguished care,
And every blessing give to thee a share.
Make thee to tread secure in virtue's way,
And happy to thy latest natal day.
To moral virtues may your actions tend,
And heaven succeed the wishes of a friend.”

“ DEAR JANE,

“ I did not receive your letter by the newsman till Saturday, therefore, have not had time to get a three-pronged fork for you, but will get one the first day I go into the town.

“ We are going to have the dolls' closet washed, therefore, I have taken Miss Jane into my possession till you return, for fear she should be broke. Miss Stowe is entirely destroyed.

“ I am sorry to hear that you were taken for me, as I fear you will think it a very bad compliment.

“ Mama's best compliments to Miss Sclater, and she is much obliged for the housewife.”

There is a postscript from the mother. “ I would have wrote to my dear Jane, but have quite fatigued myself with bustling, and hope she will excuse it till next week. Am very happy to hear such good accounts from you; your first letter was very well written. Observe, in your next, not to make so many capital letters, and spell know with a k, which you have twice omitted.”

READING, *May 7th*, 1785.

“ DEAR JANE,

“ I am very sorry you are so affronted with me for not writing to you, as I certainly should have done, but waited till I had a good deal of news to tell you at once. First, I will tell you the joyful news that we got the Paving Bill by 17, on Monday last.

“ All our party, as you may suppose, triumph much over the others, who appear quite chagrined. Mr. and Mrs. Boehn, with Maria and Harry Hessman, left Reading to embark for Germany, the day before yesterday. We had a learned dogg brought into the yard yesterday, which diverted us all very much. The man ordered the dogg to go and speak to the gentleman in company who was most fond of the ladies, and the dogg walked up to my cousin Tom and barked, which was his speaking, which to be sure brought the laugh of the whole company upon him. Charlotte Stowe drank tea with me yesterday, and we had a good many gentlemen of our party, Mr. Prince, Mr. Vanderstegen, and Mr. Osborne, besides papa, Mr. Sclater, and my cousin Tom. Mr. Valpy dined, but left before tea. Thursday, I drank tea with

Miss Sturges, and took a walk with them. My aunt Zinzan has asked mama to give me leave to accompany them to Basingstoke, which if granted, I will let you know what day, as I shall hope to meet Miss Sclater and yourself. To whom I beg my best compliments, and accept love yourself, as I must conclude, Mr. Sclater being now waiting for me to take a walk with the Stowes, where we shall take a dish of tea before we set off. We have had to dinner with us to-day two old fidgeting things of the name of Lane, who engage my papa at present in the parlour, drinking away. I hope you will drink *Gabathia* still, as it is not quite settled. Mr. Fowler drank tea and supped here one day; he is to dine here to-morrow; he asked after you. Excuse my saying any more at present than that I am yours, &c.

“ANN”

“I assure you that if you are not tired of reading, I am of writing, therefore, adieu! I am very sorry for the accident mama's horse has met with, but I hope it may not prove as bad as Miss Sclater imagines, as I am sure he is in very able hands.

“Mrs. Springett has been so obliging as to send you a pin-cushion, which I have sent you, and have the fellow to it myself.

“We all petition Mr. Sclater to stay, as we do not know what we shall do without him now. So no more now, madam; I am for the present, your ladyship's humble servant

“ANNO DOMINI, '85.”

In these summer evenings Jane and her friends would go out to listen to the beautiful singing of an evening hymn by the regiment afterwards known as the “Black Brunswickers,” which was encamped just outside Tangier Park.

Young as the sisters were, their life, as Jane briefly records it, appears to be a constant dining out, playing cards, and seeing “much company,” but their governess Miss Springett was still teaching them, although the daily lessons were not accounted worthy of note. But what struck Jane as worth recording is, that the number 555 drew £1,000 in the English lottery that year. Lotteries were then under state protection, and advertised in all the papers. Then follow a couple of domestic tragedies:

“The cat killed my little bird in the schoolroom. Elizabeth's bird died a natural death.” She forfeits a halfpenny to Betsy, gives a beggar a penny, spends 6d. on oranges, and soon after they go to Bath, where they put up at the “White Lion,” the toasting “*Gabathia*” having succeeded. She gives 6d. for steel pins, 2d. for a glass vial, and 6d. for a print and frame, but has nothing to say about the gay little city. The Bostocks were there, no doubt in lodgings in Milsom Street, with their roomy pew at the Octagon Chapel, containing a fireplace and made snug

with red curtains. It was exactly "The Bath" of "Northanger Abbey" and "Persuasion."

From Bath Jane went on a visit to some cousins at Warmley in Gloucestershire, the handsome son of which family afterwards married her sister Ann, and eventually took her out to India. His father dying this year he became master of Warmley House. Jane had nothing to record about this visit except that she "gave 8s. to the maids."

1787, "January 3rd. Ball at home, the most charming evening I ever spent in my life." Jane, although only sixteen, was now introduced into society, and a list of balls follows this one. Doubtless the Cousin Charles of Warmley House and Charles Taylor, just waiting for his commission, were present at this most charming evening of Jane's life. Being now emancipated from the schoolroom she swings "all the morning;" another day she spends "a most delightful pleasant morning with the Stowes," and reports "an uncommon fogg."

Her accounts are, "Gave a distress'd woman 1s. For a bulfinch 1s. 2d. For calling her father 1s."

Then Charles Taylor dines with them, and she describes the first cotillion ball at Reading as a very good one. These little county balls were, for many years later, even when Aun's sons were grown up, and figured at them, so exclusive that only "Manor House people" were admitted. Even the daughters of rectors were only eligible if they were staying at the squire's house, a matter of course of frequent arrangement.

Jane went up to London in the Spring, saw "the Exhibition," the predecessor of the Royal Academy, ate ices at Groom's, and went to see the company go to court. She paid a visit at Kensington Palace, was taken to Ranelagh, which she found very crowded, these being still its palmy days, and afterwards stayed with her uncle and aunt Bostock, at Windsor, Dr. Bostock being vicar and canon.

At one of the usual evening whist parties, Dr. Davies, head master of Eton, being one of the players, Jane went behind the chair of this dignified personage, and took an opportunity of saying, "If you please, sir, to-morrow is my brother John's birthday, may he and John Sumner have a holiday?"

"No, no, certainly not," was the gruff response, then the sly old gentleman glanced round. "What, Miss Jane! I can refuse nothing to such a pretty girl," so the Bostocks' two nephews—one of whom eventually became Archbishop of Canterbury, the other, who died a judge at Benares just too soon to be made a director of the East India Company—had their holiday together, as they had many another at Beenham and Reading.

Being at home again Jane writes in the little red pocket-book, "Mr. Blaggrave's horse Merryandrew is beaten by Prodigal." She rides to the course with Mr. Blaggrave and a cousin, stays at

Tangier Park, Shinfield, and Popham Lane. This was English country life at its very best, before London, the all-absorbing, had drawn off the sparkle, leaving only the dregs of the wholesome beverage of country pleasures. People went to the balls to dance and enjoy themselves; shooting parties were for men who could shoot, and battues were unknown. Real friends were made in country-house visiting, which had not become as much a conventional treadmill as the London season itself. Neighbours met to be amused and not, of necessity, to be bored. Conversation and manners were cultivated, as society required among gentle people. Young men used to flock round Jane's father to hear his brilliant talk, and his daughter Ann had the same talent to the last.

Every Sunday there was "company" to tea and supper. One day Jane rode into Reading with her father, who took her into a house she did not know, telling her he had something to show her. There, to her surprise and pleasure, she saw a life-sized portrait of her papa, in his green, silver-buttoned shooting coat, his favourite sporting dog looking up at him with faithful gaze, and his favourite gun, a light fowling-piece which had belonged to a French lady, over his shoulder. In the background was a good bit of landscape, and by his side a group of dead game. Jane was delighted; she knew not only the good-looking face and neat powdered hair, but every seal in the hanging bunch, not to speak of gun and dog. The artist died young and unknown, but had he lived he would undoubtedly have rivalled Gainsborough; his colouring was excellent, and the only deficiency in the drawing is in the figure, giving one to suppose that his sitter found it too much trouble to give him sittings, except for the head. The green coat is palpably filled with stuffing, and not a human body.

The shooting season beginning. "Lord Ashbrook, Captain Shepperd, Captain Pye, and Mr. Blagrave breakfasted and shot with papa." Also the pocket-book notices, "My mother went to Ealing by the machine at 10 o'clock;" the machine being a public conveyance. "My father to Ascot with Lord Ashbrook and Mr. Blagrave." Next, the whole party went to Ascot together, and dined at Binfield, after which they went to see a performance of "The Beggar's Opera," whose popularity lasted for well-nigh a century. "Treated the cook to the play 2s," writes Miss Jane. "Played Batt and Ball."

The gentlemen went to Bulmarsh Heath to shoot pigeons. "C. Taylor came to tea, gave me a thread housewife." Was that among the innumerable "housewives" found among "Aunt Jane's wondrous collections of trifles? Did a certain horde of children pounce upon that once-treasured keepsake, ignorant of the story it could tell?"

"My brother rode to Henley with C. T. My father and brother

dined at the 'Boar' at Reading with friends. Bought a horse for my mother."

Here follow a number of sentimental extracts, copied into the sometimes confidential pocket-book. There they are in the faded ink of a hundred years ago. At Southampton races Jane saw the Prince of Wales, then in all the brilliancy of his florid youth. "Walker the Philosopher," she mentions, "came to Reading, and had tea with us."

In 1788 the marriage of Ann with her second cousin, Charles Meredith D., took place. They proved a devoted couple, but great adepts at spending money, in consequence of which Charles was compelled to sell his property while a captain in the 24th Light Dragoons.

This year Jane was apostrophized by an admirer, who filled a sheet of foolscap with praises of the Belles of Reading, as "lovely, modest, and retiring."

In 1791 John sailed for India in "the Kent," the whole family assembling in town to see him off; but little thinking that this was to prove their last earthly farewell to him.

He rose rapidly in the H.E.I.C.S., and after Lord Lake's campaign was appointed commissioner, in conjunction with Sir Edward Colebrooke, for the ceded and tributary North-West Provinces. His sister Ann accompanied him in the state progress for receiving the homage of the native princes, for the English sovereign. His health failing, he retired with what was a moderate fortune for a man in his position, and died when upon the point of embarking for England.

A notice of his death appeared as follows in the *Times*, 1818.

"Our last accounts from Bengal, we are concerned to state, bring intelligence of the death of Mr. John D—many years one of the commissioners for the ceded and conquered Provinces, to whose mental and personal exertions the East Indian Company are chiefly indebted for an immense increase of revenue, and for the organization of their most valuable possessions in Hindostan.

"This gentleman was possessed of every qualification to constitute a statesman, and every virtue to adorn a man; in him society has lost one of its most valuable members, and the government of India one of its most able and zealous supporters. He was at once the friend of the oppressed native and faithful servant of his employers: of him it may be truly said, he was too honest to be rich."

Next to the mention of John's departure is the simple statement, "Had my ears box'd." Not a word about who box'd them, but a thing to be darkly recorded and ever remembered. She was taken to the new opera house, and to see "Dibden's Oddities;" also to the "Temple of Flora." There was no great variety in the entertainments of London in those days. On their return

into Berkshire they started at twelve o'clock, dined at Maidenhead, and reached Reading at eight.

"Lady Leith and Mr. Blagrove staying with us. Visible eclipse of the sun. Gave 4d. for poppy ribbon."

In 1792 she was taken to see the camp on Bagshot Heath. This was the year in which Burke was doing his utmost to create alarm throughout Europe by writings, "whose extravagance of style was forgotten in their intensity of feeling."

He sent his son to join the French Emigrant Princes, encouraging them to take up arms against the Republic. The French Revolution was the topic in every English household which was in communication with the world. It was the last term of Pitt's power, for he alone had stood out against declaring war with France, and now France declared war with England.

But "Aunt Jane," instead of relating the effect upon her of the sight of England's great military preparations, puts down that she "spent a penny on gingerbread." She was then staying with the Bostocks at Beenham House; her friends, Ann and Dorothy Stowe, were much with her. Dr. Bostock held three livings, and although he was too delicate, suffering constantly from asthma, to do more than preach an occasional sermon, he kept them on principle, "because they had been committed to his charge," and spent more than he received from them upon the three curates he appointed. From such pluralists as these the Church of England would reap much advantage.

He was fond of art; his nephew, Archbishop Sumner, used to mention his paintings with admiration. Every summer he had an artist to stop at Beenham, to whom he paid a guinea a week for the advantage of watching his work, and whose pictures he bought afterwards.

There is a story told concerning the canon when he was a sickly child of seven. His father, who was vicar of Windsor before him, was walking one day round the old church with the sexton. "Why do you never bury between those buttresses, Dibble?" the vicar asked.

"Well, d'ye see, sir," replied the old man, "'tis a comfortable sunny corner, and the truth is I'm keeping it for Master Johnny."

"Master Johnny," as time proved, lived to be between seventy and eighty, the proverbial "creaking hinge."

It was to Beenham that Ann's three children were sent from India. In the garden, fighting the *espaliers* valiantly as Ajax, the younger boy smashed the agate-handled dagger that had belonged to Sir Sigismund Zinzan. After the fashion of the day, Mrs. Bostock kept her old china in a little room called "the china closet," to be displayed to her lady-guests after dinner, while the male part of the company were settling down to their second bottle. Another small room was known as the "wiggery," in which the canon's wigs were kept, each on its own stand.

The mention of the "second bottle" must not be taken to imply that Beenham rivalled Hartley Court in its after-dinner symposium. It was a day when the royal princes, as well as other gentlemen, went to balls the worse for wine, as Miss Burney relates, but sobriety was the rule in the house of the conscientious and refined Dr. Bostock.

When Ann's younger son was about sixteen, he had a school friend to spend the day with him at Beenham. It was a hot summer day, and the butler brought out to the summer-house in the wilderness some of his own special home-brew as a treat to the young gentlemen. Generally speaking, none but his particular friends were privileged to try its strength. Having enjoyed it thoroughly the boys returned to the house, but on their way thither eyed one another suspiciously.

"A—, you have had quite enough of that ale, I should advise you to drink no wine at dinner," said one friend.

"I was just going to make the same remark to you, D—," replied the other. They were wise enough to take one another's advice, agreed to speak as little as possible, and sat quiet and silent through dinner, refusing all offers of wine.

When the elder guests had departed, Mr. Bostock addressed his nephew. "I was very much pleased to observe your conduct, and that of your friend, at dinner, B—. Modesty in the company of their elders, and sobriety, are not to be seen often enough in young men." He augured well of the future, and perhaps would have been in the same mind had he known the private cause of the phenomenon.

To return to Jane and her morocco books.

The book of 1793 is "the gift of my Aunt Zinzan." "Gave to charity 2s. 6d. A free gift 1s. The Dutchess of Athole and Lord Charles came to tea. C. T. called. Drank tea at Dr. Taylor's, and met a party of nineteen." Twenty guests made up "a party" at that time; dancing required more room than it does now, and if cards were played a limited number was a necessity.

Robert, the younger of Jane's brothers, was now a cadet of Woolwich, and there are extant a couple of his letters, which illustrate the Woolwich of that date, in an amusing manner.

WOOLWICH, *March 10th, 1792.*

"MY DEAR MOTHER,

"We had a proper row with the townspeople yesterday afternoon. Some of them insulted two of the cadets. We chased them about three miles and back again into the town, and in the evening, about twenty great men, with amazing large clubs and stones, besides a hundred boys, pelting great stones as big as cricket balls, attacked about ten of us, in the Rope walk. We drew our swords and formed a line, and they cried 'Surround them!' Upon which we wheeled backward on the left, where

we had a heap in our rear, so that they could not come behind us. Then we attacked them, cut one man's hand, another's shoulder, and stabbed another, and in a quarter of an hour, gained a complete victory. They did not think we should have been so resolute, as the company is in general very small, but they found the difference, for we stood by one another, and they called a truce; and well they did, for if they had stood any longer, every soul of them would have been cut to pieces.

"There has not been such an engagement for this long time. One of the cadets has his face and eye cut open with a stone, and that is all the injury we have received. I have filled my paper, and therefore will conclude with duty to my relatives and compliments to my friends, and am, my dear mother,

"Your dutiful son,

"ROBERT."

WOOLWICH, *April 3rd.*

"MY DEAR MOTHER,

"I have received all your letters and things which you have sent me, and for which I am much obliged, but am sorry you should have such an opinion of me as to think I am in the Black Hole. And as for Betty, I shall give her a trimming in the summer, for if I had deserved it you may depend upon it I should have been there by this time, as they are more strict now than ever. Pownay is come, and seems to like it very well. I don't doubt his getting on in the Academy, because he is steady. I daresay I shall make a very good *neux* (fag?) of him, as he is willing to do his duty. To make it easier for him I make the *neuxes*, but one and him, take it week and week about, as I would not like him to do all, and it would be very partial to make the other do it . . . I am very sorry you should think that we went out with intent to kick up a row, as we only did it for our own safety, and as for my sword being taken away, it is all *barum*. I called on the Speaker" (Addington) "when I was in town last week, but he was not at home. As I am confident that I have never abused his patronage, I don't doubt his being glad to see me . . . I had a pleasant party on the water on Sunday last with some more cadets, and had another encounter, *alias* "row," with the sailors of a sloop which was lying in the river. They were exceedingly saucy and impertinent, so we went on board and thrashed them, *alias*, gave them the rope's end in style, till we made them very peaceable, and then came off in our four-oared boat victorious, and had an exceedingly pleasant afternoon, and all for sixpence."

In 1793 the family was staying in their house at Hythe near Southampton, chiefly occupied in sailing up and down the river in their yacht, the "Eliza." The great flag of the "Eliza" used

to be set up on the lawn of Hythe, and under it used to assemble nautical and other heroes, to drink confusion to England's enemies, until some notably old Admiral Parry had to be borne away, corpse fashion, by his gig's crew.

In '95 the naval victory over the French, known as the "Glorious First of June" took place. The English Fleet, with its five prizes, came sailing with tattered sails into Southampton Harbour, and Jane was taken by her father on board the ship that carried Admiral Howe's flag, before the blood-stains were well cleared from the deck.

This was the year that witnessed the end of Warren Hastings' seven years' trial. The ex-Governor-General was a friend of the family's, and Jane preserved one of his visiting cards among her relics. While staying with the Bostocks at Windsor, she attended his trial. So great a mob of ladies and gentlemen in court dress thronged the entrance that carriages had to be left in close files along Parliament Street, while their occupants struggled on foot to Westminster Hall. A crowd without police! It is a wonder they were not torn in pieces before the ushers within the hall could get them into their proper places.

On one of these occasions Jane got separated from her party, finding herself in the alarming position of being alone in a surging throng of London's whole fashionable world. A gentleman observed the dilemma of the pretty young girl, and asked if he could be of use to her. She mentioned her father's name, whereupon he exclaimed, "What, the daughter of my old friend John D— of Reading!" and with friendly gallantry, pioneered her to the block of seats in which the rest of her party were anxiously wondering what had become of her.

This year her visit to Windsor was a long one, and Charles Taylor, who was possibly quartered there,* was constantly with her.

She records more than once being "much entertained with sacred music." She went to the play several times, and saw a great deal of Sumners, Howards, and other friends. 8d. for a letter from Southampton reminds one that letters were paid for at so much the mile, and that etiquette forbade prepayment. In Jane's diary occurs occasionally, "Asked (so-and-so) for a frank."

Charles Taylor escorted her to Hythe, a memorable journey for the pair, of which Jane says little and thinks the more. Her next entry is, "Mr. Taylor left us."

It was at this juncture, probably, that Jane's little ship went down, and in the midst of the tragic theme of unwritten tradition comes the perverse matter-of-fact note, "Gave 2s. for a pound of hair powder. Bought some songs," &c.

It must have been about this time that the young dragoon declared the love that had grown with his growth, and strengthened with his strength, and Jane and he were calmly sacrificed upon the paternal altar. The match was not good enough for poor

Jane, and expensive tastes, including evenings at "Arthur's," by which so many estates had changed hands, left little for a daughter's dowry. There was left to Jane a little reflected light from the lives of others, and a rare rare letter from her lost lover. For the father, whose hand had crushed their hopes, was the gaming table, the yacht, his barge on the river at home, where the punch-bowl went round in the cabin and his band of French horns made melody on deck. There was hunting, shooting, and political excitements. There were cakes and ale for him as long as he lived, and after him—ruin.

Dainty, delicate Jane, the belle of the county balls, was as brave-hearted and generous as became one of an ancient fighting race. She gave her love, once and for all, to the companion of the days when all days were merry and mirthful, and never married; but Charles Taylor, although he never forgot his earliest and deepest love, did, in a few years time, take a wife, and when he left her and their only son, to go in command of his regiment to the Peninsular War, it was to Jane he commended them, and as long as they both lived they were the objects of her unremitting kindness.

By this time an end had come to the father's jovial career; he had fallen in the grip of his old enemy, gout, and Jane and her mother were left together.

Hartley Court was shut up, and the two ladies took a house at Southampton.

It was here that the most curious incident of Jane's life occurred. It was one of those dream experiences which are rare, as single-hearted devoted love is rare, and yet most people have known of something of the kind in the course of their lives.

Jane came down to breakfast one morning, looking pale and disturbed. In answer to her mother's inquiries she said she was well, but afterwards being left alone with a cousin who was staying with them, the latter said, "Now, Jane, what is the matter? Something has happened."

"Charles Taylor is dead," was the quiet answer.

"But how can you have heard? There is no mail in."

"I dreamt," said Jane, "that I saw a detachment of the 20th Light Dragoons, headed by Charles Taylor, riding through a wood. I heard shots, and he fell from his horse dead."

"Dear Jane, to prove that this was nothing but a dream, remember that they never send cavalry into a wood."

"He is dead—shot dead," was Jane's only answer.

Fast as a sailing-ship could carry it came the news of the battle of Albuera, and with it the tidings of the death of the gallant colonel of the 20th, just as Jane had seen it. It was said by his brother-officers that Taylor placed no value upon his life, but rather seemed to court danger, and the last instance of this was when he himself led a small handful of his men in pursuit of

the flying enemy, when the English were masters of the field. They got entangled in a small wood, fell into an ambush, and at the first fire of the Frenchmen, Colonel Taylor, who was in advance, fell mortally wounded.

It was only a dream, yet Jane saw the last of the hero of her life's story, as plainly as though she had been in bodily presence on the spot.

Just as it has been handed down, this oral tradition is now written for those who believe that there are sympathies as well as powers in the immortal spirit, of far wider reach than come ordinarily within our ken, but which from time to time are manifest, for fear we should forget that the spirit can soar beyond the bondage of the body.

With this ends the story of great aunt Jane. Time went on and left her the last of her generation, living in a house in Castle Street, Reading.

A little later and she was laid beside father and mother, grandfather and grandmother, in a vault in St. Mary's churchyard.

Packed away in corner and cupboard, crowded into every available space in the house, came to light at last the accumulations of the long life, the relics of by-gone days, kept faithfully for old sake's sake.

There was the crimson brocade worn at Court by her mother; there was a heap of worked muslin and lace-trimmed gauze gowns, cut in the wonderful fashion of the "classic" revival, with the waist under the arm-pits; there was the quilted calash, big enough to contain a powdered head and feathers; there was the satin spencer, the plum-coloured tippet, the low silk slippers, and long "leather" gloves, the immense Brandenburg bonnet, the green silk umbrella with carved ivory handle, things curious in painstaking needlework, embroideries begun but never finished, and so on and so on in heaps, and bundles, and boxes, once everyday wear, now objects of curiosity and amusement. Satin shoes with the highest smallest heels ever made, quantities of long ribbed silk stockings, and the paste buckles worn with them. Waistcoats of rich silk velvet and silver, the very green coat, or its ditto, in which the father's portrait was taken. Lace in quantities; fans, from the long-handled one of Queen Charlotte's court to the tiny painted ivory of republican taste; purses, from the finest Delhi work to the home-made silk; weapons of different countries and various dates; china, from the old Worcester set, a wedding present to Jane's great grandfather, to the Oriental set which had a story of its own. Her uncle Matthias, through a friend who was going out in command of a vessel, sent to China an order for a tea and breakfast set, with his arms upon it. The description of the arms was given in heraldic terms, instead of being painted, whereupon the Chinese very naturally sent back the set, with faithful copies of these mysterious words, "gules,

argent, &c.," printed with the lines connecting the colours with the charges on each cup and saucer. It was a pity that some of these were not kept, but all were returned, and another set were made, with the arms properly emblazoned. It is believed, however, that these were painted at the Coalport manufactory. Aunt Jane's treasures were, to be brief, countless and inexhaustible; they were the most nondescript salvage from the wreck of a family ever got together. There were desks and work-boxes by the dozen, and odd discoveries were made in them, such as spade guineas in a secret drawer. The trinkets could each have told a little story, no doubt, and there were whole life stories strung with a bunch of wedding rings tied up together. There was the ribbon stamped in gold, "Rose and Royalty," to celebrate an election; there was a pincushion marked in wire-headed pins, "R.D. 1796;" there was a white gauze ribbon, woven in honour of the marriage of Princess Charlotte with Prince Leopold, ornamented with two hearts skewered together under a crown. Had certain relics, preserved for several generations, of Tovey D—who raised a troop for King Charles, fallen into Jane's hands, doubtless they would have been still in existence; these were the boots that loyal Cavalier wore at Worcester fight, but they got to be playthings to Jane's grandfather and his young brothers, and were stamped to bits in the garden of Waltham St. Lawrence. A less heroic memento was a huge teapot of Oliver Cromwell ware, with a silver spout, in which green tea punch used to be brewed for the meetings of a jovial and select club which met at the house of Mr. Dodd, member for Reading. When that gentleman died, and his effects were to be sold, the squire of Hartley Court gave orders that the teapot which had adorned so many merry meetings should be bought for him at any price. As each of the other members had wished, as it turned out, for the same memorial, the price ran up to seven guineas, but it was carried off in triumph to Hartley.

Horace Walpole mentions the death of this Mr. Dodd. "We started in life together, but he took to one element, and I to another," was the remark of the water drinker.

The great teapot had had its day, and so had the rouge-pots, the snuff-boxes, and patch-boxes of "Aunt Jane's" wonderful hoards. But closing her own life story in a fitting manner, one respectful act remained to be done. Apart from other papers was found a packet of letters, tied up with black ribbon, and written upon, "To be burnt unread after my decease."

The hand and heart from which these letters had been sent lay at rest under Spanish skies; and so to the flames and perpetual silence were committed these last links of faithful hapless love.

The old house in the Forbury, which rang with the voices of five children, has gone; upon its site, and over the gardens where

Jane and the Westminster schoolboy walked together on summer days, stand Sutton's huge seed-emporium and nursery gardens.

To few of those who knew the slender upright form of the quiet old lady of Castle Street, with her courteous manners, and listened to tales of her high spirit, as when to a hectoring attorney she replied, "Sir, I have never been afraid of a man in my life, and I am too old to be afraid now," to few of those was known the romance that ended only with her life—or, may we not think, was too good and bright a jewel to be laid aside with the worn garments of the flesh!

Row softly as you pass by such quiet barks, drifted ashore, for they have borne their freight of hopes that came to nothing; of joys gone like dead leaves; of sorrows, over which the stream of life has rolled; they have had their bright days and dark nights, though their sails are furled now and their flag pulled down, even like the threadbare flag of the "Eliza" among "Aunt Jane's Relics."

OUR FRIENDS IN THE HUNTING FIELD.

By MRS. EDWARD KENNARD,

AUTHOR OF "THE GIRL IN THE BROWN HABIT," "KILLED IN THE OPEN,"
"A CRACK COUNTY," ETC., ETC., ETC.

PART II.

3.—THE MAN WHO BLOWS HIS OWN TRUMPET.

MOST of us are acquainted with the man who blows his own trumpet. Taking a comprehensive glance round the hunting field, there is generally no difficulty whatever in selecting one or two fairly representative specimens, who thoroughly understand the somewhat egotistical art of glorifying themselves at the expense of their neighbours. As a matter of fact they are not scarce, and exist in considerable numbers.

Their music, however, varies. Some men blow their own particular trumpet in such a subtle, refined and artistic manner that it scarcely offends the ear, whilst others play the favourite instrument so loudly and clumsily that the distracted listener flies, overcome with disgust.

Taken as a rule, the great bulk of musicians are not much liked by their comrades. Nine times out of ten the deeds of valour which they proclaim so stentoriously, are chiefly imaginary, and are known by the field to possess a fabulous origin.

If hounds have had an extra good run, it is a foregone conclusion that, according to the man who blows his own trumpet, nobody has seen anything of it except himself and, perhaps, the huntsman. In his bumptious, loud-voiced way, he narrates how he jumped some place, hitherto considered as unjumpable, and so secured a start whilst all the hard riders of the hunt were coasting up and down. Being never caught again he led every yard of the way. By Jove; yes, every yard!

And in that week's *Field* and sporting papers there will probably appear a highly-coloured account of Mr. X.'s exploits. Nobody knows how they became chronicled, or why he alone, out of all the field, should have his doings published and lauded up to the skies. Mr. X. himself, when bantered on the subject, professes entire ignorance, but is willing to discuss it with great good

humour. He has an amiable weakness for seeing his name in print, but vows that the writer of the account in question is a perfect stranger to him.

Nevertheless the observant, and possibly the envious, remark that whenever a representative of the Press puts in an appearance at covert side, the man who blows his own trumpet treats him with great civility and distinction, brings forth his instrument, and plays some out-of-the-way fine flourishes upon it. A stranger is naturally impressed, and, not knowing the gentleman's idiosyncracies, accepts his statements in good faith. Several of Mr. X.'s personal experiences are so remarkable—at least, when told by himself—that if he did not repeatedly vouch for their truth, you would have considerable difficulty in believing them to be veracious. For instance, there is the story of how Mr. X. swam a river a quarter of a mile broad, and reached the opposite side, firmly seated on his saddle, just in time to dismember the fox in the absence of the huntsman and the entire field. Also the tale of how he cleared a canal, tow-path and all, which lurked unsuspected on the far side of a hedge, and which jump, when measured very carefully next day, proved to be no less than thirty-six feet and a half. And then there is the gallant incident of his jumping two railway gates in succession on his way to covert, rather than wait for the train to pass, and so arrive late at the meet.

Unfortunately for Mr. X., he is unable to produce any eye-witnesses in support of his assertions. They have all either died, gone abroad, or disappeared. As a rule, they die. But there is no fear of the younger generation forgetting our friend's feats of valour. They hear about them much too often. If only the man who blows his own trumpet could be persuaded not to talk so incessantly and exclusively about himself, people would be much more ready to give him credit for his performances, which if not brilliant, are fair. As a rule, he is too greatly taken up with his own doings to have a good eye for a country, and therefore is quite incapable of cutting out the work over a stiff line of fences. But he will jump where other people jump, and is generally there, or thereabouts. The pity is that by some strange hallucination of the brain, pleasing to himself, but not to others, he invariably imagines in every run that he has had the best of it, and frequently irritates his friends by exclaiming in a patronizing tone :

"Hulloa! my dear fellow, where were you in that gallop? I missed you altogether. Never saw you once."

Not unfrequently he meets with a richly-deserved rejoinder, but the trumpet-blower has no sense of shame, and reproof rolls off him like water from a duck's back. His self-complacency wraps him round in an impenetrable garment, and there is something almost sublime in his unassailable serenity. Laugh at

him as you please, he is a most happily constituted individual, and always on good terms with "number one."

Mr. X. rarely jumps the smallest fence without cantering up to some of his acquaintance, and saying :

"God bless my soul, sir! did you see what an extraordinary bound my horse made over that place? Gad! but he must have cleared close upon thirty feet."

"I am very sorry," comes the contemptuous, sneering, or indifferent rejoinder, according to the mood of the speaker; "but really I have not a pair of eyes at the back of my head, and even were I so fortunately constituted, I doubt whether I could succeed in keeping them perpetually fixed upon you."

"Ah!" returns our friend X. with compassionate good humour, for, to give him his due, it takes a great deal to put him out of temper, and thanks to his peculiar organization, sarcasm is nearly always lost upon him. "Poor chap; I forgot how short-sighted you are. What a misfortune it must be, to be sure. You miss so much."

"One's deuced glad to miss some things."

"Ha, ha; just so, just so. But about my new horse, I tell you he's a ripper."

"Very likely. I never knew you possess one that you did not say the same of."

"Ah! but this animal is something quite out of the way. He is such an astonishingly big jumper."

His comrade casts a critical glance at the gallant creature, who is said to have cleared nearly thirty feet, when certainly six would have sufficed. Such lion-hearted hunters are not to be met with every day, as he very well knows, and they inspire respect.

"Where did you pick him up, X.?" he inquires with some show of interest, for rare is the sportsman not willing to plunge into a discussion about a horse, even on slight provocation.

"I bought him from Northbridge. You know Northbridge, don't you? A little fellow with a yellow face and black moustache."

"Yes; a deuced hard man to hounds."

"Do you really think so? He has shocking bad hands, and could no more ride this horse than a child. He was always in difficulties, so one day, when I saw that he was particularly unhappy and ill at ease, I went up to him and made him a very handsome offer for his mount, which he accepted on the spot. That's the way to do business. The horse was quite thrown away upon Northbridge, but he's worth his weight in gold to a man with good hands."

"Meaning yourself, I suppose, eh?"

"Well, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. See how quietly he goes with me. I can do exactly what I like with him."

"Ah!" says his companion ironically. "But then we're not all such accomplished horsemen."

But if our worthy friend draws the long-bow out hunting, when actually surrounded by all the dangers of oxers, bullfinches and stake-bound fences, he waxes a thousand times more eloquent when the excitements of the day are safely over and he reclines in a comfortable armchair by his own fireside. His imagination then leaps over every obstacle, and scoffs at the narrow boundaries imposed by truth. There is no need now to bridle either his tongue or his fancy, and when let loose one flows on as vivaciously as the other.

He makes his poor young wife's flesh positively creep with the stirring recital of the heroic deeds he has performed, and the extraordinarily narrow escapes he has had from breaking his neck or his back, maiming himself permanently, or disfiguring his good looks, which he esteems very highly, whilst pretending a superb and manly indifference for them.

They have not been married very long, and the foolish creature believes in him still as next door to a Deity. Every morning as he goes forth to the chase, in all the brave array of scarlet coat and snowy breeches, her timid heart beats fast with pangs of horrible apprehension, as she looks tearfully up into his great, healthy, rosy face.

"Oh, Tommy, darling," she exclaims imploringly, "do be careful, if not for your own sake for mine. Remember that you are a married man now."

"You little goose! Am I likely to forget it?"

"Perhaps not. I hope not; but really, Tommy, dear, it always seems to me that you are so very, *very* rash. Surely it cannot be necessary for you to go out of your way to jump these tremendously big places, especially when nobody else, from your account, dreams of running the same risk."

He laughs in a lordly, patronizing manner—for her upbraidings are sweet incense to his vanity—kisses her fair cheek, and says reproachfully:

"Dearest, you are too fond—too anxious. You would not have your Tommy a coward, would you, or show the white feather when hounds run? No, no, that is not his nature."

She casts an admiring glance up at him through her tears.

"My own," she says in a voice choked with emotion, "all I ask is, that you should not be quite—*quite* so horribly brave. Every time you go out hunting I am miserable until I get you safely back again."

He gives her another hug—this style of conversation, especially when carried on before the butler and footman is extremely agreeable—then rides gallantly away, and returns at evening primed with a series of adventures even more astounding than those he has hitherto recounted.

The hounds found. There was a ghastly piece of timber, at least six feet high. Certain death stared you in the face if your horse failed to clear it. Death! Aha! what was that to him—to any brave and resolute man? Others might shirk it if they liked, but he would sooner meet with his end than despise himself as a “funkstick.” No, never should it be said of *him* that he had turned away from any mortal thing. The fellows were all hanging round and hesitating. Gad! the sight made his blood boil. It was more than he could stand. He crammed his hat down on his head, took his feet out of the stirrups, and——

“And—oh! what, Tommy? You do frighten me so,” gasps the poor little woman.

“And by an extraordinary miracle got over. Only man who did. Not another one would follow.”

“I should think not, indeed,” says his wife with a sob of relief and terror.

“The young fellows now-a-days are a poor lot,” he continues disparagingly. “They haven’t half the spirit of we married men.”

“Perhaps that’s because your wives render you desperate.” And with these words she falls upon his neck and kisses him, and vows that never, never was there such a daring, fool-hardy, but altogether delightful personage as her Tommy. Only it will not do for him to go on in this reckless and quixotic fashion. His life is far too precious, ever so much too precious.

If he has no regard for it himself, and risks it needlessly every day, at least he might remember how dear it is to other people—that they would be simply miserable if anything were to happen to him, &c., &c. As for courage, it is downright wicked to carry personal bravery to such an extent. Why! A Gordon is a joke to him, and so on, and on.

Tommy sits in his armchair, stretches out the long manly limbs that he so wilfully endangers, and listens with the utmost complacency to all this innocent tirade. It is an hour of unmitigated enjoyment to him, and he cannot refrain from throwing in a few picturesque additions every now and then, which still further increase Mrs. Tommy’s fears for his safety, and exalt him almost to a demi-god in her estimation.

In his wife’s presence he has no hesitation in blowing the trumpet with loud clarion notes, to which every fibre of her sensitive being responds.

And uncommonly pleasant he finds the process, with a pretty, adoring little woman as listener, who never detects a false chord and goes into raptures over even his most fantastic flourishes. It is a great temptation to perform loudly and frequently, and he makes no effort to resist the insidious pleasure.

She is his; why should he not impose upon her love and her

credulity? The one is as sweet to him as the other, for they flatter his self-esteem in about equal degrees.

But take care, Tommy. You are playing with edged tools. The time may come when this trusting and simple creature will no longer believe so implicitly in your gallant deeds, when suspicions may begin to arise in her mind, until at last you stand revealed as a braggart and a boaster.

Then, instead of the soft caresses and tender solicitude to which you have been accustomed, you may be met with nothing but scornful indifference and passive contempt.

For the misfortune of all those who indulge in the dangerous practice of blowing their own trumpet too offensively is, that after a very short time they are sure to be found out, and by none sooner than those who are nearest and dearest.

Women who have been once deceived in the object of their adoration are pitiless judges. Men are much more lenient, and often will derive amusement from the idiosyncracies of a friend.

But a wife never forgives her lord and master for bragging and boasting, once she discovers that he is an adept at these accomplishments.

She rushes from one extreme to another, and instead of regarding the unfortunate trumpeter as a prodigy of valour, very quickly gets to look upon him as a hypocrite, a humbug and an impostor.

Woe be to that man if hereafter he attempt to play the very feeblest and most mournful notes upon his cherished instrument. As the years pass, it runs a terrible chance of getting rusty from disuse, and even when he does snatch some rare opportunity of practising upon it, his tunes no longer sound as they did. The chirpiness has gone from them never to return.

4.—THE DANGEROUS WOMAN.

SOME ten or fifteen years ago, the dangerous woman was not nearly so frequently met with in the hunting field as she is at present. She has multiplied in an alarming degree. Formerly, ladies who rode to hounds and who went as hard as men were the exception rather than the rule, and their staid female relations of a past generation looked upon them as utterly unsexed and wholly condemnable.

Now all this is changed. A great revolution has taken place in public opinion, and the growing popularity of the chase is rendered conspicuous by nothing so much as by the increased number of fair Dianas who join in our world-famed national amusement. Prejudice apart, there is no real reason why they shouldn't. The exercise is a healthy and a pleasant one. Nice, quiet women, country born and bred, possessing a natural love of sport, and a fair knowledge of it in all its various branches, are a

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distinct ornament and addition to the hunting field. They resemble flowers on a dinner-table, adding to, rather than detracting from the solid delights of the dinner itself.

Most of them have ridden since they were children, and know how to put a horse at a fence, quite as well, if not better than their husbands and brothers. Their hands are lighter, their sympathy more subtle, and unless they have the bad luck to "get down"—a misfortune which must happen to every one at times—they are never in anybody's way, and can thoroughly hold their own, even when hounds run hard over a stiffly inclosed country.

But the ladies of whom we are now speaking are the practised equestriennes, who, alas, to this day, form but a small contingent, and we are forced to admit that by far the greater portion of Amazons who grace the hunting field with their fair presence, can only be characterized as dangerous, both to themselves and their neighbours. They are the best-natured creatures in the world, brimming over with fun, good-humour and vitality. They mean no harm, not they; but for all that they are to be shunned and avoided.

Their courage and their ignorance is something surprising.

It is impossible to help giving a grudging admiration to the one, whilst loudly deploring the other. Without exaggeration they seem to know no fear, and to possess no nerves whatever. With loose seat, dangling reins and up-raised hand, they will drive their horse in any fashion, either trotting or galloping, sideways or standing (it makes no difference to them) at the most formidable obstacle. And, wonderful to relate, nine times out of ten they bundle over somehow; not gracefully or prettily, but still they get to the other side.

It really seems as if women, in spite of their physical inferiority and fragile exteriors, often possess more of that quality called "pluck" than the lords of creation. This may give rise to contrary opinions, but the conclusion has been arrived at in the following manner. Take a field, say, of some three or four hundred members. Perhaps three hundred and seventy of these may be men, the remaining thirty, ladies.

You will probably be able to count the real hard riders among the former on the fingers of your two hands, whilst out of the thirty ladies, certainly half-a-dozen, if not more, will do their very best to keep with hounds, and this, too, in spite of the inferior animals they are often mounted upon. What becomes of the courage of three hundred and sixty-two gentlemen who constitute the remainder of the field? Taking their lesser numbers into consideration, the fair sex certainly show a more gallant front than the men. True, in most instances, the man, from his superior strength and physique, will certainly outdo the woman, but from a more comprehensive view, the ladies appear to possess a greater share of nerve.

In what other way is it possible to account for the presence out hunting of so many dangerous females? Their inexperience, their utter want of knowledge, their truly execrable horsemanship, have not the slightest deterring influence. Valour soars above such humble considerations, and scoffs at minor difficulties. Oh! for a little discretion, but that quality is conspicuous only by its absence.

A popular actress runs down from town for the day, accompanied by some enamoured and wealthy youth, who mounts her on his most perfect performer.

"Can she hunt?" "Oh! dear, yes. Why not?" "Has she ever been out before?" No, but she has ridden up and down the Row scores of times, is not a bit afraid, and sees no reason why she should not jump fences just as well as her neighbours.

Her youthful adorer tells her to fear nothing, to give her horse his head, and follow him. She nods back in reply, clenches her white teeth, and obeys literally. At the first fence, though it is but a gap, she flies clean out of the saddle, and is only re-seated, after a few agonizing seconds, by the shock occasioned from landing right on the quarters of her gallant leader.

Does she mind? Is she intimidated? Not she.

On the contrary, she gives a little triumphant laugh at finding she has not tumbled off altogether, as she certainly was very, *very* nearly doing, and bumps and rolls away over the trying ridge and furrow, forcibly reminding one of an ornamental jelly, that quivers and shakes preparatory to a most tremendous downfall. Her blood is aglow, and she is getting warmed to the saddle, so that at the next fence she does better, and is only pitched on to the horse's neck. By seizing hold of his mane, however, just in the nick of time, she manages to scramble back before any very serious mischief is done. Just think what courage it requires to jump, when every moment you fully expect to be jumped off. Why, it amounts to positive heroism.

For place or people our dangerous woman has no respect, and has not the faintest notion of waiting for her turn. She is much too ignorant of the etiquette of the hunting field.

Seeing a small cluster of horsemen gathering round a fence, she at once imagines they are shirking, and with a loud "Look out, I'm coming!" charges right into their midst, mayhap knocking one or two down, but that is a matter of no consequence.

Then she flounders wildly over the obstacle, cannons against the unfortunate gentleman in front, and all but capsizes him and herself too.

He looks round wrathfully, with ugly masculine oaths springing to his lips, and sees a pretty, saucy, flushed face smiling benignantly at him from under a battered pot hat and a halo of fuzzy flaxen hair considerably disordered. He recognizes

Miss Tottie Tootlekin of the "Gaiety," famed for the symmetry of her legs and the elegance of her dancing, and stifles his displeasure. Who can feel angry with so adorable a creature, even although she does not appear to greatest advantage when bundling over a fence? No! The dear thing has given him too much pleasure many a time ere now. Her divine breakdowns still linger in his memory. So after ascertaining that his horse has not been injured, he reserves the ugly words for another occasion—one is sure to arise before long—and smiles back at Miss Tottie in return. Now, if the dangerous woman were dangerous only at her fences, it might be possible by a little diplomacy to avoid her, but alas! such is not the case. As long as she is within twenty yards of you, you are never safe, and cannot foresee the vagaries which she may perform.

You very soon learn that it is wiser to yield her precedence at every obstacle, rather than expose yourself to the almost absolute certainty of being jumped upon. But it is horribly annoying, when you are galloping after the hounds to secure a start, to find your horse crossed and recrossed at almost every stride, until at last you hardly know how to get out of your tormentor's way.

Neither is it pleasant to be jostled against a gateway, and have your leg squeezed till you could scream with the pain, and you do not like having the gate itself slammed in your face, whilst Madame or Mademoiselle hustles through, regardless of *everything* and *everybody*, and makes not the smallest effort to keep it open.

Apparently it is beyond your power to escape altogether from the dangerous woman, for even whilst trotting quietly along the sides of the roads, she comes cantering up from behind and regardless of the fact that you are altogether within your rights, and that there is no room for her to pass, she will remorselessly drive your most cherished hunter on to the various stone heaps, or else right into the ditch. As for an apology, she rarely condescends to make one, although she may have been the means of bringing you into direst trouble.

Another of the dangerous woman's little idiosyncracies is, that she possesses as supreme a disregard for canine as for human life. She jumps quite as readily upon a hound as upon a man, and thinks nothing at all of breaking the ribs of the best animal in the pack by riding over him. *That* is a very minor catastrophe.

"Hurt, is he? Oh! I'm awfully sorry, but it can't signify very much. There are plenty besides him, and he should not have got in my way."

Hounds are simply so many speckled dogs to her, that have no particular value, and one appears exactly like the other. The proprietor's legitimate anger, something of which reaches her ears, seems utterly absurd and unreasonable. With a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders, she exclaims:

"Dear me! What a fuss, to be sure, and all about nothing. Just as if it mattered!"

When the huntsman is making a cast, and requires elbow room, she dashes ruthlessly in amongst the pack, and scatters them like a hail-storm.

Fortunately, there are a few external signs by which the dangerous woman may generally be distinguished. To begin with, her attire is nearly always wanting in that quiet, unostentatious neatness which characterizes the thorough sportswoman. She usually wears a blue, green, or peculiar coloured habit which does not fit, and is evidently made by a second or third rate tailor. The skirt bags round the waist, and the body is adorned with showy brass buttons. Not infrequently she appears in earrings or brooch, and makes liberal display of a gold watch chain and a bunch of charms. Her tie is either a dummy, or else so execrably tied that it works round under her ear. It is almost a certainty that her hair will come down during some period of the day, and her hat is always crooked, or else battered in. If hounds run well, her face grows very red. She is flushed and excited by the unwonted exercise. Her reins are loose, her seat unsteady, and her hunting-crop affords much inconvenience, especially the lash, which is perpetually getting entangled in something or other. The dangerous woman rarely, if ever, sits square on her horse, with the left shoulder brought well forward, and elbows into her side. She goes flopping, and jogging, and jolting along, in a manner which, though painful to the beholder, must be infinitely more so to the unfortunate steed who is doomed to carry her.

Men as a body regard her with detestation, and never lose an opportunity of expressing their aversion.

Every defect is sneered at and magnified. Not one but has some story to tell against her, or who owes the dangerous woman a grudge.

They resent her presence in the hunting field, and not without cause. Her ignorance incenses, and her rashness irritates, until she cheats herself out of the admiration ever due to courage.

The fact is, if the men must be knocked down like ninepins, they would much prefer the process being performed by one of their own sex. At least they could then have the gratification of expressing their sentiments in forcible language, and allow wounded feeling to find a natural outlet.

It is a hard case to be forced to bottle it up, because a wild and dangerous female chooses to bowl you over and to treat you without any ceremony whatever.

5.—THE SPORTING HORSE DEALER.

THE sporting horse dealer constitutes a feature of almost every hunting field. He comes out with the intention of selling his

horses, and keeping that end steadily in view, manages very successfully to combine business with pleasure. When pursuing the fox, he honestly feels that he is enjoying himself, and yet not neglecting his profession.

Not infrequently he is a gentleman by birth, specious and plausible, whose apparent candour puts you off your guard and overcomes your better judgment. It is as well to fight shy of him. Your dealings with him are seldom, if ever, quite satisfactory, and you have no redress. He holds you hard and fast to your bargain, and refuses to take back an unsuitable animal, except at a ruinous price. In short, the gentleman dealer will nearly always contrive to get the better of you in some way or other, whilst if a quarrel arises, he invariably manages to have the law on his side. We dismiss him, since it is not of him we would speak, but of the regular, old-fashioned sporting dealer, who gains a more or less precarious livelihood from his profession, and who, five times out of six, is a real good fellow.

If he recommends you an animal which he has ridden to hounds himself, his recommendation can generally be depended upon. He knows exactly what a hunter ought to be, and in what requirements he fails. He has a decided advantage there, for he judges from personal experience, whereas non-sporting dealers are either forced to buy from looks alone or else from hearsay; never a very reliable method. You need not blame them for deceiving you, for are not they themselves continually being deceived?

There is no greater mistake than for people to imagine, as they so constantly do, that their pet dealer is infallible. Alas! poor man, he is frequently taken in, and moreover, perpetually subjected to very severe losses and disappointments. Folk in a hunting county will not buy without a trial with hounds. They send back the horses lame, coughing, or so seriously injured as to greatly detract from their value. The dealer has to bear the risk of seeing his property depreciated for the sake of the chance of getting rid of it altogether. Then, again, he sells what he believes to be a sound, honest animal at a good profit. The nag drops down dead, whilst being conveyed in the train to his future destination, and a post-mortem examination reveals that he has been suffering from abscess on the brain, a clot of blood, aneurism, or a hundred other unsuspected causes. Here, again, the dealer has to put up with the loss. Frost too has to be taken into calculation. If the earth is icebound no one will buy, and there is very little money to be made when some twenty or thirty horses are standing week after week in the stable, eating their heads off. As a rule, dealers are not nearly so black as they are painted. There may be a certain proportion of rogues amongst their ranks, just as there are in every other walk of life, but at the same time, honest, respectable ones exist, whose chief anxiety is to suit their customers and study their

interests. Buyers are often unreasonable and almost impossible to please.

If they buy a horse, and he does not happen to turn out well, they at once abuse the dealer, and declare they have been done. Temper, want of condition, sprains, splints that develop themselves subsequent to the day of purchase, in fact, every ailment—and they are many—to which the noble animal is heir are all laid at the same door; and however straightforward a dealer may be, he seldom gets the credit of being so. People are so horribly and ridiculously suspicious, that they prefer to believe the worst, rather than the best of one another, and they fail to see how often they defeat their own ends by jumping without sufficient grounds at the conclusion that their neighbour is deliberately trying to cheat them. Why! in nine cases out of ten it is to their neighbour's *interest* to treat them well, rather than badly, and self-interest, as we all know, is the great motive power which rules the world.

We maintain that, whatever the sporting horse dealer's faults may be—and as, like the rest of us, he is only mortal, the presumption is he has some—he is a truly gallant fellow, and the harder he rides the more you may trust him.

He lives quietly, eats and drinks sparingly, retires to rest at ten o'clock every night of his life, rises with the lark, writes all his business letters, attends to his accounts, and superintends his stable arrangements before he goes a-hunting, and has nerves of iron, wrists of steel. He sallies forth on some gay four or five year-old. The animal has probably only been in his stables a couple of days, and he knows absolutely nothing about it. He is a tall, muscular young fellow, with a keen, hawk-like eye, and long legs that curl themselves well round a horse and make him yield to their compelling pressure. It takes a great deal to unseat him, as the young ones soon find out. Our friend trots out to covert at a steady pace, eschewing company. He feels his animal's mouth and otherwise makes acquaintance with him. If he is a brute, it does not take him long to discover the fact, and he calculates the highest price obtainable, and where to place him. To keep a bad horse never pays, yet on the other hand the good ones sell themselves. No subtle persuasion or half truths are required in their case.

Once arrived at the meet the manners of the young one are quickly ascertained. If they are nice our sporting dealer allows him to mix freely with the crowd, riding him with long reins, and making him bend well to the bridle hand. His friends and customers exchange salutations.

"Hulloa, H.!" they exclaim. "What sort of a horse is that you're on? Is he a clipper?"

H. smiles gently—there is something singularly childlike about his expression when he smiles—and says:

"Don't know yet, sir; but I'll be able to give you a more satisfactory answer after to-day. At least," he adds *sotto voce*, "I hope so."

After a while the hounds find, and H., who is averse from revealing his stable secrets to the whole field before he knows them himself, starts off, taking care to ride a little wide of the pack, but nevertheless keeping them well within view. Before long, a fence comes across his path, and fortunately it is just such a one as he would wish to meet with, being a thin bullfinch, with a shallow ditch on the take-off side, over which a good horse can jump, and a bad one scramble without much risk of a fall.

He gives the "young 'un" a touch of the spur, and the willing animal cocks his small spirited ears, and bounds over like an india-rubber ball. That will do. H. has already confidence in his steed, and sends him striding along the green pastures with a vengeance; for hounds by this time have settled to the line, and are running at racing pace over the sound old turf.

A couple more fences, cleared lightly and well, prove that his mount knows his business, and is worth at least a hundred and fifty if not two hundred guineas. H. now has no hesitation in joining the bulk of the field. He is prepared to show them how the "young 'un" can perform, and not hide his light under a bushel by riding a solitary line.

At the first check he casts a rapid glance around and takes in all the bearings of the situation. A stiff piece of timber, over four feet in height, divides him from the calmly expectant crowd, who being on the right side, and in the same field with the hounds, look with pleasurable curiosity at the rash horseman on the wrong.

This, however, is our friend H.'s opportunity; one which he contrives to make most days when he has the satisfaction of finding himself on a decently good hunter. Personally he knows no fear, being a man of dauntless courage, so he sets the young horse at the stout ash rails, with the determination of one who will not be denied, and who, by hook or by crook, intends to get to the other side. The good beast, feeling this, clears them brilliantly, and with a foot to spare. A murmur of approval runs through the crowd as H. quietly pulls him back into a walk, and looks to the right and to the left, with a bland air which seems to say, "Gentlemen, that's nothing, nothing at all. Wait until you see us take something really worth calling a jump."

This little episode is not without result. Presently, as hounds are still feathering uncertainly about the ridges and furrows, one of H.'s oldest customers approaches, and takes a prolonged survey of his animal.

"Niceish horse that you're on to-day," he says laconically.

"Yes, sir, very," H. replies. "Sort of horse would carry you like a bird. See what loins he has, and what a back. That's the

stamp gentlemen want to get over a country with, and be carried in safety."

"Very likely, but I'm not requiring a hunter just now. I'm full."

"Indeed, sir! More's the pity; for this is the nicest young horse I've been on for a long time. They are not to be bought every day. Perhaps you would oblige me by throwing your leg over him, not with a view to purchasing, but merely to see if your opinion is the same as mine. He gives you a wonderful feel over his fences, and is as quiet and temperate as a seasoned hunter."

After some little further persuasion, the customer does as desired, and descending from his own horse, mounts the young one, whose attention being concentrated on the hounds, stands quite submissively during the operation. His present rider merely intends to canter him round the field, feeling that against his better judgment he has weakly yielded to H.'s solicitations, but hounds suddenly take up the scent and fling forward at a great rate. Before he can change back they are stealing ahead, and he is bound to stick to his mount, unless he would lose sight of them altogether.

A brilliant twenty minutes follow over the very cream of the country. Fences are big, and towards the end of it men begin to tumble about like ninepins. A wide bottom is productive of much "grief," but the "young 'un" faces it like a lion, and carries him in grand style.

After all, what does it matter if his stables *are* full? He begins making a variety of plans as to how he can turn old Rattletrap into the cow-shed, and run him up a temporary box until the spring, when he will be turned out to grass; how he will find a good home for Glorvina, whose fore legs are daily getting more and more shaky; and how, if the worst comes to the worst, he might part with Slinker, who can never quite be depended upon at either water or timber. In short, those twenty minutes produce a most curious revolution in his state of mind, for whereas he began by being certain that he didn't want another horse, he ends by feeling convinced that he cannot possibly do without one, and should be absolutely culpable if he did not avail himself of the present opportunity. "Buy when you can, not when you *must*," his inward monitor advises.

Meanwhile H. has had an unusually pleasant and comfortable ride on his customer's confidential hunter, and has kept close behind that gentleman all the way, so as to pick him up in case of accidents. None occur, fortunately, and each fence well cleared adds an extra five-pound note to his property. When at length hounds run into their fox, and he is asked to put a price upon the young horse, he looks shrewdly at his customer's flushed and beaming face, and replies without any symptoms of hesitation:

"I can't take a penny less than two hundred and twenty

guineas for him, sir, even from you. I should ask most people two fifty, but I should like to suit you if I can."

The customer has been too much delighted by the horse's performances to make any demur or haggle over the sum demanded, and before H. leaves the hunting field, the good young animal on whom he sallied forth in the morning has passed out of his possession. Sometimes he wishes he could keep them a little longer, but he has no cause to regret the transaction, having cleared over a hundred net profit.

This, however, is one of his lucky days, and it is quite on the cards that a great portion of this hundred will dwindle away in paying for the unlucky ones, on which occasions he derives neither pleasure nor remuneration. But that's the way of the profession. If good horses did not pay for the bad, trade would come to a standstill altogether, and leave a very sorry balance at the banker's at the end of the year. It makes a thorough hunter come dear, but what's to be done? Dealers must live.

Apart from this, our friend H. is entitled to the very highest praise for the truly gallant fashion in which he risks his neck on behalf of his customers. It is he who ascertains for them what an animal is worth, and many and many a nasty, unpleasant ride must he have during the process. He has to put up with kickers, rearers, rank refusers, curs, brutes of all kinds, to accommodate himself to hard mouths and light mouths, rough paces and smooth, fast and slow, rogues and roasters, in short every species of animal, good, bad and indifferent.

The great majority of men who go out hunting are filled with self-pride, and think an immense deal of themselves if they cross a country successfully on tried performers whom they know intimately. H. manages to keep with hounds on the very worst of nags, and by his patience, courage and fine horsemanship frequently succeeds in converting them into hunters.

Do not let us, then, grudge him his profits—they are not as large as they seem—and if any man deserves them, he does. He has to subsist like the rest of us, but he will not "do" you intentionally, and if the sporting horse dealer were to disappear from our hunting fields he would leave a decided gap, and prove a very serious loss to most people who follow hounds. We want him, and cannot get on without him, whilst his gallantry and courage call forth our highest admiration. Long may he continue to hunt and give us the pleasure of witnessing his gallery jumps.

The humorous dealer is another type frequently met with.

He is an older and a heavier man, who rides great fine weight-carriers, and generally occupies a forward place when hounds run. By the bright, sparkling and persuasive wit of his tongue he secures many a customer, who begins by laughing at his jokes, and ends by buying his horses. He is full of anecdote, gossip and

story, and has the ready tact and happy knack of suiting his conversation to his listener. To the elderly gentleman he talks politics, and reveals any deficiency in the animal he desires to sell with a peculiarly magnanimous frankness that produces an excellent effect. For the younger generation he has always some *bon mot* ready, or some choice, very choice tale adapted to their intellects and taste. With ladies he is simple, sentimental, cordial, poetical and loftily philosophical by turns. He is a clever fellow, who makes a profound study of human nature, and knows the foibles both of men and women by heart. His powers of observation stand him in good stead, and teach the wisdom and necessity of humouring customers. Perhaps he laughs at them behind their back, but he manages to dissemble his real opinions on most ordinary occasions. Nevertheless, he has strong instinctive likes and dislikes, which could not be otherwise with his quick brains and ready tongue. He hates a dullard or a fool, and holds him in supreme contempt. He cannot always succeed in concealing his feelings, though he flatters himself that he does.

Provided a man treats him well, he will treat him well in return, but if he attempt to display any reprehensible "cuteness," or behaves in an ungentelemanly fashion, then he feels no compunction in paying him back in his own coin. If for interest's sake he does not sell him a downright bad horse, he will mercilessly castigate him with his tongue, and humble him to the very dust by a storm of shrewd, unanswerable remarks full of worldly wisdom and native wit. Few men can beat him in argument or repartee. He wields those formidable weapons with a dexterity conferred by long practice and much natural ability, and moreover delights in the effect they produce. Nothing pleases him more than to squash an enemy who has incurred his righteous wrath, but it requires a good deal of provocation to draw him into one of these contests, and it is only when his probity is doubted, his word disbelieved, or his feelings wounded that he shows his claws. What would the British lion be worth if he were always chained up in an iron cage, and could not fight on occasion? Is a man to be insulted with impunity, simply because he is a horse dealer? No, certainly not. He is made of flesh and blood, that quivers and throbs under a smarting word, just like every one else.

Our humorous friend is a man of considerable culture, who takes an interest in all the leading topics of the day. Moreover, he has a taste for reading, and gets through a good many works of miscellaneous fiction. A sentimental novel, ending up with love and matrimony, pleases him immensely, for beneath his somewhat rough exterior beats a warm and kindly heart, easily touched by romance. Altogether he is original and a character; differing from ordinary, common-place humanity, who sometimes fail to understand him. In consequence, he now and then makes enemies, who dub him forward, vulgar, pert; but his friends far

outnumber his foes, and they laud "Old G." up to the skies, and talk of him as a first-rate "chap." They laugh immoderately at his witticisms and caustic observations, and wherever he happens to be, a little circle of admirers invariably surround him, eager to hear the last good story, and to repeat it to their comrades. "Old G." is one of the best-known men in the hunting field, and on a dull day when scent is poor and things slack all round, he seldom fails to enliven the proceedings. All the same he never loses sight of the main chance, and whilst laughing, jesting and talking, effects many a "deal." He keeps a good class of horse, and as a rule treats his customers liberally and well. Rub him the right side instead of the wrong, and there is no better fellow in the world than "Old G." His tongue will only amuse, and neither offend nor insult, if you possess sufficient insight to discern that he is not one of the baker's dozen, turned out so freely by Nature's mould, but possesses a distinct individuality of his own.

Then we have the stout and affable dealer of the rosy cheeks, blue eye and benignant smile, who looks rippling over with the milk of human kindness. His manners are quite charming; so soft, suave and persuasive, and there is a sort of innocent frankness about him, which it needs the utmost moral courage to resist. He carries you away insensibly. Those unctuous utterances of his, possess an irresistible fascination, and cast a glamour over your clearer judgment.

He comes out hunting on a compact jumping cob, as sensible as a man, and in a sober way thoroughly enjoys the chase, though he does not profess to ride hard. He has a quick eye for a horse, and always has a useful lot in his stables, and is so courteous and fair spoken that he can persuade a customer into buying almost anything he chooses. Not until the customer is removed from the magic of his presence does he remember that he really has not had much of a trial, and that the fences jumped were absurdly small.

Other dealers there are many. It would take us too long to describe the different types, but taken as a body, all hunting people owe them a debt of thanks, and should hold out the hand of friendship to the men who find them good horses with which to enjoy their favourite pursuit.

(To be continued.)

THE PHANTOMS OF FLEURY.

IT was towards the end of August when I paid my first visit to the old Château de Fleury.

My road, a mere cart track, lay across the plain, between the golden stubble fields that till a few days before had been covered with ripe corn. It was not often I walked away from the great forest that stretched darkly over the gently swelling hills behind me, but it was late in the afternoon, the shadows already gathered thickly beneath its shade, and I turned involuntarily towards the sun. My walk was solitary. The only people I met were one or two labourers, men and women, returning from their work, who saluted me as they passed with a "*Bon soir, m'sieu.*" The scene was very peaceful; the air was warm and soft, the sinking sun cast his rays gently over the earth; far away, from one of the many villages dotted on the plain, came the sound of the vesper-bell, and the land looked very fair. But with its beauty there was also that sadness which will come when summer is giving place to autumn. The earth is at rest. She has brought her wealth of fruit and flowers to perfection and is taking a breathing space before beginning her winter struggles. Summer is still with her, but he hovers with outstretched wings, ready to answer the voices that call him elsewhere, turning a last tender, loving farewell look upon the land he has so blessed with his presence.

And with this sadness upon me, I passed through the old gateway and stood in the great quadrangle. The grass had grown long and the paths were covered with weeds, but it was not quite deserted, for at the well an old man in a blue apron was drawing water. He raised his bucket and with slow laborious steps turned and passed through a little postern gate, the water splashing over as he went. The inclosure in which I stood was formed on three sides by outhouses and stables; on the fourth, facing me, by the dwelling house, forming a second court and separated from the large one by a moat, crossed by a drawbridge. This inner court was brilliant with flowers, wasting their sweetness sadly, for there was no one now to open the shuttered windows and come down the terrace steps to wonder at their beauty. And I stood under the great limes by the well and thought of the days gone by when the château had been full of life and gaiety, and wondered if such times would ever come again.

Presently I roused myself, and turning to the left I went round to the other side of the house. The moat surrounded it only on three sides; the back, or rather the real front, faced a large lake in a far-stretching green park. There was a terrace on this side of the building too, the steps leading into a beautiful rose garden. The roses were falling now, but the evening air was laden with their scent, and here and there was still a perfect flower. The shadows were lengthening over the water; two or three little islands lay darkly on its surface; the wild luxuriance of the vegetation pointed, no doubt, to the fact that the place was very damp, but on this August evening it looked warm and sweet enough.

Presently the sun flung a last bright smile to the tall, stately trees, and touched the weathercocks on the old turrets with gold. The sky became tinged with delicate pale green and rose colour, the reflection of the sunset I could not see. For a few minutes the old place was full of soft light, and then the radiance slowly died away and the twilight came on apace.

Still I could not bring myself to leave the spot. I had sunk down upon a moss-covered stone among the roses and was gazing out over the lake. Vague, dreamy thoughts came floating through my brain, and I sat on unconscious of the passing time.

Suddenly I became aware that the light on the picture before me was changing. Mysterious shadows lay upon the grass on the opposite shore of the lake. The islands were floating in a silvery mist. An old boat moored close to me seemed to shine like a fairy skiff, fit for any of those dainty dames of the olden time, of whom I had been dreaming, to take their pleasure in. Clearer and clearer became the light, more fairy-like and bright the scene, and when my own shadow grew out of the ground at my feet, I turned, and behold, the great golden moon had climbed the heavens and was peeping through the trees to the east. A slight breeze sprang up and rustled their leaves softly. They whispered and bent to one another, and the air was full of their sound. In the centre of the lake a fish leapt, breaking the water into a thousand sparkling ripples that eddied to my feet.

At last I rose and turned to go, when I became aware of a startling change in the appearance of the house. It was no longer dark and deserted. The shutters were thrown open. Lights shone from every casement, and figures passed rapidly to and fro. On the ground-floor the door-windows were wide open on to the terrace, and a stream of light poured forth from each, mingling with the moonlight. Sounds of music floated out to me; not the jingling, rapid airs of our modern dances, but slow and stately measures that brought with them visions of powder and patches, rapiers and lace ruffles. Amazed I watched for a little time and then, curiosity getting the better of me, I went up the steps and stood by the centre window; presently I went in. No one seemed to notice me, and I looked on quietly.

A long broad hall stretched before me, evidently going the whole length of the building. The floor was highly polished, and reflected the light of hundreds of wax candles that hung in clusters against silver sconces on the oak walls. At one end was a musician's gallery, whence came the sounds I had heard. The front of it was festooned with flowers, and flowers were twined round the frames of the family portraits on the walls. There were many portraits, of all periods. Knights in armour, dames in high-peaked head-dresses, grave statesmen in furred gowns, children playing with dogs, and demure maidens in ruffs and farthingales. But my attention soon strayed from the pictures to the figures passing and repassing before me. It was evidently a great and important gathering. The host appeared to be a tall portly man, his powdered hair tied with black ribbon, a violet satin embroidered coat, and fine lace ruffles at throat and wrist. He leant on a gold-headed cane and tapped a snuff-box as he talked. There were crowds of courtly men talking to elegant women, whose eyes glanced all the brighter for their powder and rouge. At one end two couples were gliding through a minuet with many a bow and sweeping courtesy. As I grew more accustomed to the brilliant scene, I seemed to know instinctively who some of the people were. Those two old dames on the settee in that corner are kinswomen of the host, and their tongues have not ceased since I came in. No doubt they are discussing some dainty dish of scandal. That tall stern man moving about with an air of authority must surely be the son and heir.

But there is a couple that more than all the rest excites my curiosity. The man is small and slight and fair; he is dressed in the extreme of fashion, in pale pink satin, with diamond buckles on his shoes. His rapier has a jewelled hilt, and through it is drawn an embroidered handkerchief. He stands near the top of the room, and is evidently a guest of importance, for the host pauses now and again to smile and say a few words, which the young man answers carelessly in a thin, bored voice. His partner is a much more interesting study. She is very young—not more than seventeen—and has a delicate, fragile look. Her hair is piled loosely on the top of her head, and a blue ribbon runs through it. It is the only bit of colour about her. Her white silk sacque falls in full, graceful folds from her shoulders; she holds a drooping cluster of white roses in her hands, which nervously arrange and rearrange the flowers; her face is very colourless, and her deep blue eyes have a strained, nervous look. The two do not seem at ease in each other's company; from time to time the gentleman pays the lady a vapid compliment, to which she responds faintly or not at all.

Now there is a general move towards the top of the room, and the musicians cease. The company gathers round a square oak table; on it are pens, ink and several large sheets of paper.

A man in plain black garments, evidently a notary, takes a seat. Father and son stand near each other, and on the farther side the young couple who have so interested me; then I see the likeness between the girl and the two men opposite, and it flashes across my mind that I am assisting at that betrothal scene I had heard of a few days before. The notary begins to read; the document tells of the dower of the bride and the settlements made by the bridegroom, calling forth many exclamations of wonder and sighs of envy from the assembled guests. The father and son listen with stern satisfaction; the bridegroom pretends to pay no attention; the bride, poor little thing, gets paler and more nervous. Now the reading has come to an end, and amidst a buzz of conversation the host rises and signs the papers. The witnesses on his side follow, then the bridegroom and his witnesses. The notary turns to the bride, and smiling, offers her the pen. With trembling fingers she takes it, then hesitates. Her great sad eyes are lifted appealingly to her brother, and seeing no hope there she looks at her father, and a piteous murmur that is half a sob breaks from her: "Father!" But no softness comes over the stern face. "It is your turn to sign, my daughter!" is all the response she gets. Despairingly she bends over the table, and her name is added to the rest.

The business being over, the ladies crowd round her with congratulations on the splendid match, and surrounded by them she moves away. Presently she begs them to leave her by the window. She feels a little faint, she says, but a few moments' quiet will soon put her right, and they leave her in the deep embrasure. Once alone, she rises and, watching her opportunity, slips out into the night. I, too, step through my window and see her flit across the terrace in the moonlight. At the foot of the steps a man starts out of the deep shadow, with a low: "At last, sweetheart!" and catches the slender figure in his arms for a moment. Wrapping a large dark cloak over her white garments, he draws her arm through his and leads her a few steps, when he is stopped by a hand placed suddenly on his shoulder. Turning, he sees the dark face of his lady's brother. With a cry the girl starts from him and flings herself between the two men. Her brother thrusts her aside: "Stand back! I have to deal with him, not you!" But she clings to him sobbing, and sinking on her knees, promises anything if he will only let her lover go safe. He shakes himself free, and in another moment the crash of swords brings a wondering crowd to the windows. No one interferes, or attempts to go to the poor child holding the back of a seat to keep herself upright. Presently a heavy fall and a shriek from the girl tells what the end is. The white figure flies to the prostrate man, and the little hands try to lift the heavy head. "Kiss me, sweetheart," murmurs the dying man; "I wish I could have saved you," and then all is still.

For a few minutes no one moves. The lovers lie as if both, instead of one, were dead; the guests gaze at them with pale, scared faces, and midway between the two groups, half-way up the steps, father and son speak in a low whisper. The moon sheds her calm, silvery light over all, as she would were the scene she illumined a happy instead of a most tragic one. Suddenly I see the girl lift her head; noiselessly she rises to her knees, then to her feet. The two men on the steps notice nothing, so deep are they in their whispered conference. With a swift, stealthy movement she glides down to the water's edge, and before her father and brother, warned by a cry from their guests, can stop her, she has stepped into a light pleasure boat moored there, and has pushed off into the lake. In vain are the cries to her to return. She floats slowly away in the moonlight, and as a solemn hush comes over the spectators, the sound of a low-crooned song comes across the water. Then it stops and the white figure rises to its feet, a sobbing cry reaches us, and, with lifted arms and upturned face, it sinks—sinks—and disappears. A scream bursts from some one in the crowd—and the figures vanish.

I was sitting alone among the roses, the old house stood silent and deserted behind me, the crazy boat was quietly moored at the little landing stage, but the moon had disappeared and an owl in the trees near by was sending forth his melancholy cry on the still night air

A. H

DUCHESS FRANCES.

By SARAH TYTLER,

AUTHOR OF "CITOYENNE JACQUELINE," "SAINT MUNGO'S CITY," "LADY BELL," ETC.

CHAPTER X.

A BOY BRIDEGROOM.

IT was in relation to this drawback of her lonely expatriation, which Frances found to loom in greater prominence before her the nearer the time approached for her departure, that she hit on a satisfactory solution to the difficulty which would not have occurred to many people. She was contemplating rather ruefully one day the obligation of travelling with her baby, and no other companions save an awkward, useless English serving-maid, and an equally clumsy, stupid serving-man whom she had engaged at low wages to go with her to France. For Sir George had of necessity preceded her with his detachment of fellow-soldiers. The prospect after her arrival was not much more agreeable. She would have to live shut up in a French lodging, with her husband absent for the greater part of the time on his military duties. Tied down as she must be, it would be hardly in her power to attend the court even when she was bidden. She had heard much of that splendid court from Elizabeth Hamilton, and it was Frances's ambition—prompted partly by her own vanity and love of power, partly in her husband's interest for his credit and prosperity—to win fresh laurels there. The obstacle was her lack of means wherewith to provide a suitable substitute to take her place when she was absent; for even she, with all her confidence and daring, recognized that it was impossible for her to leave a helpless infant in the charge of Bet and Barty in a household of foreigners, of whom the mother knew nothing.

Then Lady Hamilton suddenly asked herself why should not Cherry Norton accompany her? She, Frances, was fond of Cherry, whom nobody wanted at home, while her cousin might and would want her child-crony abroad. Cherry was only a simple girl who had just entered on her teens, but Frances found a charm in her, and had already noted her courage and intelligence. The woman knew the child Cherry was as trusty as steel and as good as gold.

It would be promotion of a kind for her to see the world, and she would like it, because she returned her patroness's regard according to the uncalculating nature of the young creature in a measure which was heaped up and running over.

The Hills, the only people who had any right to dispose of Cherry, were in poorer circumstances than ever. Indeed, they had been already talking reluctantly of the incumbency, in justice to their children, of their getting rid of their niece by sending her out into service of some sort, though Mrs. Hill would fare badly without the girl's willing help and patient drudgery.

At the same time, equally in justice to herself and her husband, with their offspring present and future, Frances could not for a moment take the responsibility of providing for Cherry, though Lady Hamilton liked her young cousin passing well and would have been glad to show her the world, perhaps lend her a lift in life which ought to keep pace (in proportion) with the Hamiltons' climb to the top of the tree. But thrifty Frances did not even care to pay Cherry's expenses to France. She thought it hard enough on her finances to have to discharge the duty for Bet and Barty.

Quick as lightning another idea struck Lady Hamilton—a brilliant idea. Why not contract Cherry, before she went, to some youth of tolerable position and means, who would come bound for her maintenance thenceforth? He would be only too thankful to have his wife finish her education under such favourable auspices, and to him, in days to come, the child-wife could look with assurance for a suitable provision. This was to do her cousin a good turn, without mistake.

Such marriages had not yet gone entirely out of fashion, though they were rarer than they used to be. The late King, Charles the Martyr's eldest daughter, poor Princess Mary, not long dead of the small-pox, had been married when a bright little girl of ten to the Prince of Orange, a manly lad of fifteen; only last year—an eventful year in Frances's calendar—his Grace of Monmouth, his present Majesty's son, had contracted a marriage with his little mistress, Lady Anne Scott, the great Scotch heiress, then a girl of thirteen. Humbler people were not slow to follow royal examples, and it was not an absolute requirement, though it was a frequent ingredient in these marriages, that the bride should be "a fortune."

The tug of war, and it would have foiled all save the most dauntless of combatants, was to find within a given time a match for Cherry, to make her friends see the propriety of the match, and to get her and her partner in the transaction to agree to it and to her accompanying her cousin to France.

Frances's inventive genius could suggest no more fitting person than her cousin—a genuine cousin once removed in this instance—Peter Thornhurst, who was staying in London at this

time. He was a likely enough lad of sixteen, though he was not quite so well to do or so entirely his own master with regard to the property to which he was heir as the match-maker could have wished.

He had nothing to do with Agnes Court in Kent, the place which had belonged to Frances's grandfather and had come through Madam Jennings to Richard Jennings in Hertfordshire. Peter was the eldest son of a worthy Kent parson, who, not content with burying himself among his books, had committed the still more unpardonable imprudence of marrying a second time a portionless damsel, who had brought him a large family of younger children in addition to Peter, the son by the first wife. These were not very promising antecedents for the object which Frances had in view. But there was yet another cousin Thornhurst, a brother of Peter's father, an elderly bachelor, a man of substance and the squire of Three Elms, who had agreed to do something for the lad, which he might well undertake to do, seeing it was understood that Peter was to be his heir. It was by the instrumentality and at the expense of Thornhurst of Three Elms that the boy was in London, with his commission in the King's Regiment bought for him and a modest sum of money to meet his expenses placed at his disposal.

Frances did not choose to ask herself with what eyes Thornhurst, the uncle who certainly was entitled to be consulted on any arrangement entered into on his nephew's behalf, would look on his early marriage with a penniless girl like Cherry Norton. All that the young lady would permit herself to see with regard to her cousin Peter and her cousin of Three Elms, was the meritoriousness of her, a Thornhurst on her mother's side, not having sought to make the acquaintance and get into the good graces of the squire of Three Elms in order to oust his nephew from his inheritance and secure it for Sir George and Lady Hamilton. It detracted from the merit of this disinterestedness that Frances had not set eyes on her elderly cousin, and that, further, he was known to regard her mother with cordial detestation. But Frances was not in the habit of doing such small sums in moral arithmetic as would have enabled her to add or subtract from the tale of disinterestedness with which she credited herself.

Peter's father, a simple, unworldly soul, did not share his kinsman's dislike to Madam Jennings. He had even written to her to bespeak her good will or that of any of her family who might be in town, as friends, as well as kinsfolk to his lad. The letter came to Frances's ears, though she was not on terms with her mother, and she forthwith put her finger in the pie and made up to Peter. Not only so, in her genius for arranging for everybody, and ruling all around her, she had recommended him to lodge with the Hills, who would have the benefit of the sum paid for his board and lodging. Thus, what might be reckoned an im-

portant advantage in the case, especially as it had to be settled speedily, was secured already. Peter and Cherry were personally acquainted, nay, they were good friends, for the lad was an honest lad and a kindly, if somewhat faulty in temper. He was one of a large family, straitened in their worldly means, nevertheless the members of that branch of the Thornhursts were wholesome-hearted and sweet-blooded. In place of his harassed step-mother's finding him the plague of her life, he was her right-hand man, a greater stay even than his reverence, and Peter loyally regarded her as the best friend he had in the world after his father. He was as fond of his little brothers and sisters as if they had been whole and not half kindred, and as if he had been an affectionate girl instead of a brave boy. His first instinct in the circumstances was to help. When he saw how Cherry Norton was put upon and overworked in the service of the Hills, he forgot all about his sword-knot, the pipe-claying of his belt and his step in marching, in order to do the best he could to lighten her load.

Cherry, not to be outdone, strove that his comfort, of which he made so little, should be better attended to than Mrs. Hill would have dreamt of demeaning herself to look after it, though she consented to be paid for so demeaning herself. Many a slice of hot meat, dish of quince marmalade, and darned stocking he owed to Cherry.

But these were not exactly the relations which betoken a dawning love affair. Indeed Peter and Cherry were on the most plain-spoken of friendly terms. "You know you are only a girl, Cherry; you can understand nothing at all about it," he would tell her with brutal frankness, when his boyish tongue was running on about his drill, his future barracks, his commanding officers, and the foreign campaigns he hoped to see one day. "And I think, Peter, if you would pick your steps, your stockings need not be so muddy," she would suggest, "nor your shoe knots catch the mire, for you have rather a big foot. You are shooting out in your growth—you cannot help that, any more than you will be able to prevent the sleeves of your regimental coat getting short at the wrists. What I'm fain to believe you might mend in your habits, is your tramping through all the puddles on your way to and from Whitehall."

"I'll try to remember," he would say in his good nature, which was yet quite consistent with a fiery spirit and a stubborn temper when he was roused. "I don't want to put people to any trouble I can save them from. But lord! Cherry, if you saw the roads at home! and what would any man have thought of me if he had come upon me gingerly picking my steps like my mother or my little sister Nan? Did I ever tell thee, Cherry, how she will hold out her frock and dance in the kitchen to us all?—'tis the prettiest sight. Even father, though he hath no mind for dancing, cannot find it in his heart to chide her."

Secretly he thought Cherry's round brown cheeks and great

dark eyes like a gypsy's, and not at all pretty. If you wanted beauty, now, there was his Cousin Hamilton: there were a skin and a colour with hair as fair as Nan's; she had been to court, and dwelt there—sure, she was a fine lady, with a great deal to say to you and mighty amusing. But poor Cherry was no beauty and no wit, though the good wench had sense. She was a fright in her old red skirt and bodice and white sleeves, from which she had grown away as she said he would do from his smart regimentals.

Cherry would have borne him no malice if she could have read his thoughts; she would have granted he was right in the main, while privately she was of opinion that he was countrified in his talk and manners, that his ears were as large, in proportion, as his feet, that his nose was too broad and his teeth set too far apart.

There was not a particle of illusion where these two were concerned. There was even small material in their unripe juvenile natures, as yet, out of which to construct dreams and fancies, vague yearnings, exquisite joy and unfathomable despair. Both boy and girl were precocious after a fashion, manly and womanly for their years, but it was a kind of precocity that had thrown another side of their natures into the background, and deprived them of the leisure to develop one description of sentiment.

Cherry's case was less hopeless at present than Peter's. Little girls of twelve may be simple and straightforward. They may but lately have left off nursing dolls and playing with skipping ropes; they may even have been prematurely caught up by real household cares and swept away by real live babies. But it is in the nature of the small maidens to be visited on occasions with shy, dim visions of a fairy prince; not many young girls, let us trust, have either the bold, defiant temper, or the hard, worldly education of Frances Jennings, which rendered her impervious to the idealization of love in her sixteenth year, and a slave to the actual passion before she was seventeen. Because, as everybody knows, love is a disease which, like measles, to be taken easily and got through without any difficulty, must be surmounted in its earlier stages in our first youth. Seventeen is not very old, but age is comparative, and Frances was not young at seventeen. Cherry, on the contrary, had not missed her visions—only they were of the very shyest and vaguest, far too much so to have a personal fulfilment for long years to come. Peter Thornhurst, the fairy prince! Cherry would have half expired with laughter, half died with shame at the idea.

But if Cherry was in a bad frame of mind for Frances's cruel experiment, Peter's state was all but hopeless. Sound a manly boy of sixteen, full of a boy's restless activity, dawning ambition and innumerable interests in the world without, on his views as to a wife and you will probably affront him or tickle him, or do both,

beyond measure. Go further and point out the wife you are thinking of for him. This is not one of his elder sister's companions, some young woman in the glory of her young womanhood whom he cannot choose but admire in a startled, dazzled way. Neither is it some older woman still, the widowed mother of a younger playmate, who has been kind and sympathetic to the lad, for whose autumn charms and gentle motherliness he has felt a chivalrous thrill of devotion. It is an old-fashioned girl of twelve, growing away from her frocks, who knows nothing in his estimation, whose toilsome tasks he has taken upon himself out of sheer pity, whom in the same matter-of-fact spirit he has suffered to cater for him out of carelessness, or selfishness, or pure indifference. Unfold such a prospect to him, and you will disgust him beyond expression, you will positively insult him. Boy as he is, he may resent the liberty you have taken with him to his dying day.

However, at this stage of her existence Frances was well-nigh incapable of being baffled, and she addressed herself first, like a good general, to the foe who was bound by all the instincts of his age and sex to give her most trouble. If she could not win over Peter nothing could be done. If she gained him she believed she could bring round Cherry.

Peter was already the humble servant of his cousin Hamilton. He was fascinated by the beauty and brilliance which enchanted so many; he was much struck by, and deeply grateful for, the generous friendliness which caused her, who was so greatly sought after, who had as it appeared to him so many claims on her time and attention, to spend them on a raw lout like him. She had taken him to the Hamiltons' house at Knightsbridge and introduced him to that galaxy of gallantry, distinction, wit and beauty, in which she now shone pre-eminent to Peter's mind, before which he sat speechless, transfixed with modest wonder and delight.

She had hitherto amused herself with the boy's ungrudging homage and entire subjection to her. Now she was going to turn it to account for his good, as well as her own, no doubt, for where would he get a wife with all the qualities which wear well, like Cherry in her spring-time promise? Where would he find friends such as she and Sir George would be to the husband of Cherry? What an influential connection she was forming for him out of that notable Hamilton circle! What obscure country lad with no more than a peradventure for his future, since the squire of Three Elms might yet take unto himself a wife in his old bachelorhood, have sons and disinherit Peter, was ever favoured with such advantages? And she was kinder to him than ever.

Frances led on the fine company among which she took him to flatter her before him with compliments on the soldierly exploits of the Hamilton brothers, Anthony and George, Richard and John,

all departed or departing to form the French king's corps of English *gens d'armes*, and on the martial glory which they were destined to achieve under Turenne. In the end Peter Thornhurst was persuaded the Hamiltons were so many Paladins with whom the most distant connection was an honour, who could if they would, every time he came across them, so instruct him in the art of war that he himself would have a chance of becoming the greatest general of the age. When he returned from his campaigns covered with honours and scars what would people say down at the homely Kent parsonage? What would Cherry Norton say, after he had carried water for her in the dark and cleaned knives for her on the sly at a pinch?

Then Frances seized the opportunity of a visit which Peter paid her at her lodging when the two were alone together to commence her attack. She began by positively waxing plaintive. She descanted eloquently on the lone and forlorn condition on her part which was to be the price that she was to pay for her husband's glory. She was to travel with her baby and no better protection or company than Bet Ball the child's nurse, and Barty Knevet, Sir George's odd man, from Gravesend to Rouen and so on either by barge up the Seine, or by posting on land to Paris, where she did not know a single creature out of her husband's troop. She would not have a woman body with a mouthful of sense to turn to, if she felt ill or the child sickened, or if she but pined to hear her mother tongue from less Frenchified lips than Sir George's.

Peter was deeply touched. He would fain have thrown up his commission and attended on his cousin Hamilton if that would not have meant ruin to him and misery to his father, if it had been fit and proper for him to see this lovely unprotected divinity restored to the arms of her husband. He would have given much to know of a woman friend like his worthy step-mother, who would stand by Lady Hamilton in her exile. His heart bled to think of so much beauty and kindness being exposed to hardship and reduced to solitude.

"If so be Cherry Norton could have ris and come with me, I vow I should have been content and comfortable," sighed the lady. "Sure, Cherry's post here is none so enviable that she should think twice about quitting it."

Here Frances proceeded to entertain him, as if he did not know it well enough already, with the cheerlessness of Cherry's lot, including the growing melancholy madness and desperate straits of Mr. Hill, the peevish complaints of Mrs. Hill, the clamorous exactions of the children, the waning strength and spirit, as they must wane at last, of courageous, self-denying Cherry.

She was able to put it all so vividly before him that though he had known it from the beginning of his acquaintance with Cherry, he had never seen it exactly in this light. He was ready to sink into the ground with remorse for having, as it appeared to him

at this moment, not so much lightened her burden as aided and abetted her taskmistress by adding the caring for him and his comfort to her other troubles. His heart burned at Cherry's woes as it had erewhile been burning at Frances's.

"If somebody would only take away Cherry from it all, and bestow on her the care and thought for the needs of a growing girl, soon to be a woman, the cherishing and petting which the poor maid wants, but, good luck! has never got," sighed young Lady Hamilton.

"Would not you, Cousin Hamilton?" he burst out in the innocence of his heart. "It would be like you—like your goodness, I mean—and she would be fine company for you on your travels away in France."

"I trow I would, Cousin Peter, right gladly," said Frances warmly, "if it were but in my power. But I am a poor woman of my station and I have Sir George and our little daughter to think of. An' I were to tell thee the truth," she continued insinuatingly, "I have sometimes thought it rested with thee."

"With me!" exclaimed the lad in amazement, "how can that be?"

"Why, if you were to be so moved as to contract yourself to Cherry," said Frances, boldly coming to the point, "with the consent of your father and her guardian of course, and could advance money out of your allowance to pay her expenses, and maybe to forward her a gift now and then, I would undertake to carry her with me to France and keep her till you claimed her, when, if you will believe me who know her well, she would be a godsend to you all the days of your life. Indeed, I have often thought, cousin, that you two were made for each other and would be a pretty pair," said Frances languishingly, but unblushingly.

Peter Thornhurst was staggered with a vengeance. "But I am too young to wed, and Cherry is far, far too young. Besides, I never thought of such a thing," and he laughed nervously.

"Then it is a thousand pities," cried Frances sorrowfully. "Cherry must be left to sink into a kitchen drudge, or more likely to drop into a decline, poor thing, while I must go on my way without company."

"But—but, Cousin Hamilton," stammered the boy, "you never mean to say there is any danger of poor little Cherry's dying of neglect and of the heaviest end of the string in the Hills' house?" And as he blurted out the words he had a horrible feeling that in that case he would have helped to murder Cherry.

"Truly I do," said Frances solemnly, having talked herself into the belief of what she was saying, "and it would be very ill done on your part to leave her to die, when you could save her and render me the greatest service. You must see for yourself that you have made the poor little soul like you better than anybody else in the world, and that she would die to be of the least use to

you. But why do I call her little—unless that her frocks are so short? She will be taller than I am, fast. And you do not mean to say, sir,” throwing a dash of archness into her serious speech, “that mine is not the properest height for a woman. I vow I know not any girl of her years who is better favoured, were she but prettily dressed, or who giveth greater promise of growing up a sweet and noble creature, especially if she have the fine French finish to her education, than Cherry Norton.”

He was more dumfounded than ever.

And so she talked and talked, confounding and bewildering the lad, flattering his budding manhood, piquing his natural gallantry, wringing his kindly compassionate heart, playing upon him in every way till, in his pity for Cherry, his devotion to his cousin Hamilton, and his lack of care for himself, he was ready to do anything—slay dragons, or hamper himself for life by contracting an absurd marriage with a little girl of twelve.

“Well, cousin, if you think it would work the deliverance of poor Cherry, who does not deserve to be trampled upon, and be a great gain to you, it does not matter so much for me, I am ready to share what I can spare with Cherry. I am a man and can knock about for myself. I shall be going to fight the Dutch one of these days, I trust, and if they give us trouble, as I make no doubt they will, for the Mynheers are stout beggars both by land and sea, I need not be back in a hurry. When I do return, if I ever return, I daresay I shall marry and settle down like my neighbours, and it may as well be Cherry as any other lass,” he ended with awkward bluster.

“And I dare swear when that day comes you will not see Cherry’s equal far and wide. But if you or she should not be of the mind to carry out your wedlock then,” said Frances quickly, “there are such things as the breaking off of youthful contracts.”

“I am beholden to you for mentioning it, madam, but when I promise I like to perform,” said the lad stiffly, and the quick-witted woman saw she was going on a wrong tack.

“Sure, it would not be like either of you to desire such a scandal,” she hastened to make the amendment.

“And I can do nought till I have writ to my father and asked his consent,” Peter began again, speaking with a firmness which looked a little like his coming to his senses. Then the unheard-of ludicrousness of the information he was about to convey got the better of him. “By George, it will sound mortal queer down at Crowbrook—our parish in Kent—that I am thinking of getting married already,” and he laughed once more, an unsteady confused laugh.

“But you would not write to your father before you have spoke to Cherry?” said Frances raising her delicately pencilled eyebrows. “When will you speak to her, or should you like me, as we are such great friends, to do it for you?”

"Oh! thank you kindly, that will be best," exclaimed poor Peter, catching eagerly, with a sigh of relief, at the respite from what he could only see in the light of a most trying proceeding, after his former frank and free relations with Cherry. "You may be able to make out what she wants, if she will tell you plain, whether she would rather bide on as she is in Speedwell Lane or get away with you to France, by letting me marry her right off."

"My dear Peter," said Frances, putting her hand on his shoulder and pressing it confidentially and affectionately, "**can you** doubt her answer for an instant? Why, she will jump with delight at your offer. What girl would not be proud and happy to secure such a husband? But I will be open with you. I don't desire to ensnare you in order to benefit another; or to incur the reproaches of your relations for not having made you acquainted with the gospel truth. I hope you are sensible that you will not marry a fortune in Cherry Norton. I do not suppose she will ever have a penny of a fortune. As we have understood she is quite dependent on her uncle Hill whose affairs are at their last gasp, and with such a family he will never make up his losses."

Frances stopped triumphant in her undeniable candour, which was really a master stroke of genius.

"I am not seeking a portion," said Peter, proudly, lifting up his head which he had been hanging a little. "I never thought to marry a fortune, soon or late. I am willing to make my own, or to let it be as Providence willeth. I am only thinking of serving Cherry Norton, who, you tell me, is in a poor plight, though, I'm bound to confess, I did not see as much—nay, nor half as much; but what should I know?" And Peter was guilty of snapping his fingers in his agitation. "I crave your pardon for asking to hear more of the matter. 'Tis of my own knowledge that the wench—thy pardon again for speaking so rude of thy friend—hath over much work, and is put upon in Master Hill's house, notwithstanding she hath always looked bright and willing, which is misleading. But are you main certain, my lady, that there is no other means of redress than what, methinks, in my ignorance doubtless, is a somewhat desperate remedy? As to obliging you, I would fain do it likewise—that I would, and I expect you know it—in poor payment of your goodness to me. Only tell me. Cousin Hamilton," urged Peter wistfully: "art full persuaded Cherry's health will give way, and that thou canst find no other person to go with thee to France and bide with thee there?"

"Sure and certain. If you doubt my word there need be no more on't," replied Frances with the dignity the lovely little lady knew well how to assume. "The girl is outgrowing her strength and overworking herself, any fool may see that—I crave *your* pardon, Cousin Peter—though she will always look bright and willing on her part of the bargain—it is the child's nature to—till she slip into her grave. Then some folk will wake up and wonder

and be sorry that they were not wiser, tenderer, mercifuller in time. For Cherry gives every promise, as a blind man might see, of being a fortune in herself, a fortune that will never run down, though she hath no other fortune in her lap, such as is apt to take wings and fly away. If it had not been so, I, having an honest counsily regard for you, my young master, would not have spoke as I have done."

"I believe you, Cousin Hamilton," said Peter humbly.

"As for me," resumed Frances with spirit, "I have not been used to go a-begging for friends, but as sure as death, Peter Thornhurst, I am scant supplied with them in this emergency. People tell me I've made my bed and must lie on it, and for the most part I'm right willing. But if aught should befall George Hamilton and his brothers—and, between us two, it doth go against my proud stomach to be beholden in everything to the Hamiltons—granted I have become one of them by marriage—I have not a living creature to turn to that would be bound to befriend me and my infant. If Bet Ball were out of the way and Barty Knevet gone with his master, we might even come to lack a cup of cold water, in our need, over yonder in France. I am going to foreign parts of my own free will, following my husband as is my wife's duty and pleasure; but France is a strange place to me if it is familiar to him. If he were taken from me in the chances of battle, or in any of the duels which adventurers are quick to engage in, I might fall into penury—I might perish forsaken. Dost wonder that I crave for one face I have known, one kind woman-child even to keep me company and help me to bear up in a sore struggle?"

"No, cousin, no," answered Peter, much affected in response to the emotion which she had called up into her still girlish face. She was such a girl yet herself. It was so strange and pathetic to hear her speak of her infant and refer to her possible widowhood with clasped hands and eyes bathed in tears. He looked on his beautiful young kinswoman, whom he had worshipped as a goddess ever since he had come to town a raw country lad and she had lavished kindness upon him, and he could not withstand her appeal. "It shall never be if it rest with me and Cherry," he said determinedly.

CHAPTER XI.

A GIRL BRIDE.

THE next thing was to enlighten Cherry with regard to the promotion in store for her. Frances hired a hackney coach within the hour, took her baby in her arms as another decoy duck and drove to Speedwell Lane, picking up Cherry, for a wonder without any

satellite, and carrying her off for a ride in the masterful way which Frances had been accustomed to practise even where the Hills were concerned.

Cherry had never lost her passionate affection for Frances. Such an affection for an attractive elder girl is often the first romance in the life of a sensitive, imaginative child who has dwelt in retirement and had few sources of personal interest. It is an affection engrossing, unquestioning, not unlike love in some respects—a kind of idyllic forerunner of love. And as if Cherry had not a swarm of troublesome children always round her, causing her days to be spent in toil and care like those of the most encumbered mother, she extended a full measure of the affection to Frances's beautiful baby, hugging the little Elizabeth and paying the most enthusiastic homage at her infant shrine on every possible opportunity. Cherry was doing this on the present occasion. She had lifted the child from her mother's lap and was holding the live burden as if it was the greatest honour that could come to the devotee for her thin arms—a little like spindle shanks at this date—to be filled and weighed down by it, instead of resting from their labours. She was talking fond, foolish nonsense in answer to the babble of the little one, and cooing over her as a mother pigeon coos over her nestling.

Then Frances, nodding her fair head, said briskly, "In good truth, Cherry, I believe you'll be sorry to lose us two plagues."

"That I will," answered Cherry in simple earnestness. "It will be the darkest day in my life that I remember, Cousin Frances."

"Then what say you to coming with us and seeing foreign parts yourself, Cousin Cherry?" demanded the tactician gaily.

"Ah! an' I could," cried Cherry eloquently.

"There is a way," said Frances with tantalizing vagueness and caution, "if you could bring your mind to it."

Cherry opened her great brown eyes wide, gave a gasp and then recalled herself to a sense of duty. "None that I can see; but you are only fooling me, cousin. Were it otherwise, I must still bide with Uncle and Aunt Hill, and do the little possible I can for them after all they have done for me," said the girl seriously.

"Not if they want to get rid of thee," said Frances a little brutally. "If they have not enough for themselves, it stands to reason, Cherry, that they must do the best they can without you."

She softened her statement when she saw how the girl, who was not without the knowledge that the question of her leaving the Hills had been mooted between husband and wife, shrank at the words.

"Cheer up, Cherry," Frances enjoined her. "Others want you if these curmudgeons don't—others who will do a deal more for you and be main proud and happy to do it, if you'll let them."

"Don't say 'curmudgeons,'" said Cherry in a quivering voice. "They've never grudged me bite or sup all these years till now."

I've shared alike with them and their children. It hath ever been, 'Cherry, have you had enough? Come again, my girl, here's more yet to part between us,' when there was none too much for them and the children."

"They might have said that to any servant to whom they paid no wages, beshrew them!" said Frances carelessly; "no, no, thou must take a new master and thou must not begin by spoiling him. Let me set you the example. Doth it strike you that I spoil my master?" asked Frances with laughing eyes.

"You are different," said Cherry mystified; "you are a married woman, and in a sense Sir George is your master, but in another sense he is your sworn servant, and, sure, he'll keep his vow."

"It will be the worse for him if he doth not, and he knoweth it," said Frances coolly; "at the same time that was mighty prettily said, and I should like a friend of yours to hear it. You must not let him cozen you out of requiring him to perform his servant's duties."

"I do not understand you, Cousin Frances," said Cherry, still utterly lost to the speaker's meaning. "Either I am stupider than usual this afternoon, or you are funning me beyond bounds. Is it you that doth want me, that would have me with you and let me see foreign parts? That is just like you, and, methinks, in that case never girl would have had a nobler friend and mistress. But woe's me! it cannot be; you must see it as well as I, though your soul is so great—greater than your reason, and that ain't small. It is only your dainty body that is like a fairy queen's. Nay, laugh not, my lady, for you are my beautiful lady as well as my sweet Cousin Frances. How could I be such a burden on you when you have told me with your own dear lips that Sir George's going to France and your settling there have made such a hole in your income that you will have to sell some of your fine clothes to discharge your travelling expenses? Oh! if the squire and madam at Holywell would but help their own daughter, and such a daughter! with Sir George so brave a soldier, and this dear baby——"

"Have done, Cherry," said Frances shortly, looking anything rather than sweet.

But Cherry was too much carried away by her own feelings to attend to her lady.

"I'm certain Cousin Bab would speak up for you," she urged, "and even if they would not spare you money, oh! Cousin Frances, if you would but take some steps to be reconciled to madam, your mother, and the squire, your father, ere you go—you will forgive me for mentioning it? Uncle Hill says that the last hath been but a poor harvest, while the Dutch fleet hovering about is ruinous to our trade, which may excuse the squire for not advancing part of your portion. But, dear heart, if a word of old kindness passed between you," entreated Cherry with humble

wistfulness, "you would depart with a lighter heart and carry a blessing with you."

"Don't speak of it," said Frances, looking very black, as the women of the Jennings family, with the exception of Bab, were wont to do when they were thwarted or interfered with. "You mean well, Cherry, but you must leave alone my private affairs. I am quite able to look after them without thy advice. Oh! dear no, there is no offence taken, silly wench. But, prithee, it was your business, not mine, that we were discussing. You are wrong in thinking it is I who want you—not that I don't want you neither, though you've contracted that infection of the Hills' house against which I warned you ages ago. You would preach too, for as young and pretty as you are; but keep your preaching for your master—there is a master in the matter, though you think fit to style me your mistress. Ain't you curious to learn his name? Why, what a little hypocrite you are, child, not to press me, catch my hands, and half wring them off, say you'll drop Baby out of the window next you, if I don't that minute say his name. Didst fail to draw thy valentine last February? Hast never laid a nine-peaced pod on the threshold of the house-door, watched breathless for the first man's foot which should cross it, and cried, 'Hey! here! you fellow, you chair-man or potman, or beggar, what be you called by your familiars? What name did your mother's gossip give you at your christening?' Cherry, I take pity on your desperate anxiety. Your man's name begins with a P., and it doth not stand for an English pope or prior, or a prince of any country. Dost take me at last? It is 'Peter,' not the Muscovite, nor the painter, somebody nearer home."

"Peter Thornhurst," guessed Cherry bluntly, without any emotion, save a little merriment. "Your heart must be light to make game of me and Peter. I wot he never thinks of me, save when he wants to break his fast earlier than usual, or hath forgot what he did with his gloves. But I ought not to say that neither," Cherry corrected herself remorsefully, "for many a good turn he hath done me, and helped me all he could, not to say given no trouble in the house that he could avoid. Oh! yes, he is a good lad, though, do you know, cousin, his teeth are set a monstrous space apart, and did you ever notice how he will tramp—forgetting his promise to the contrary—through the vilest puddles between the City and Whitehall, bringing back no end of mud to soil the floor cloths?"

"Nay, you must not find fault with Cousin Peter, Cherry," said Frances meaningly, "for he do think no end of you. Let me say in your ear, he is the man who wants you—wants you so much that if he got his way he would be contracted to you one of these days, and have you kept for him till he and you are of an age for him to claim you. He would furnish you with the means to go over with me to France and be made a finely educate young

lady. Think of all that, Cherry, and dare to say ill of him and his teeth again."

Cherry certainly sat motionless; she did not laugh like Peter, but she was fully as incredulous.

"Impossible, Cousin Frances," she declared stoutly; "there is some huge mistake. He never said a word which could mean such a mad thing. What would a boy like him do with a wife?" and at last Cherry giggled at the absurd idea. "If you only saw what an appetite he hath, you would judge that he could eat a family larder bare by his own exertions. He would rather play a game at single-stick with some lad of his own years than have a word to say to any woman for a dozen years to come—always excepting yourself, for whom he hath a great admiration and honour, seeing you have been so condescending to his rusticity. What idle nonsense is this?"

Frances saw that it was time to take high ground with the contumacious damsel, to whom she had spoken half jestingly before, but now she grew as grave as a judge, a blooming girl-judge, another Portia. "I am fair astonished at you, Cherry Norton. If you think fit to refuse an excellent offer—well, after all, that is for you to decide, nobody is seeking to force your will, though you are so much under age that your friends might believe they were justified in treating for you; and I crave leave to warn you, madam, you'll not get the declining of such another husband for many a day, if ever. Men are becoming scarce, what with the wars and the plague, and it is not every young fellow who would look at a girl like you—I put it plainly for your good—without a penny, who may yet grow up crooked, or catch the small-pox, and be clean marred before he can have you. But to refuse is one thing, to make a mock of an honest, honourable proposal is vastly different. It is neither like a polite gentlewoman, nor a good Christian. As to his not having said a word about marriage to you, he and I have spoke the thing over, which is both more respectful to you and more discreet. What should a lad like Peter do with a wife, quoth she? Marry, Cherry, what should he do without one, or a mother or sister or kinswoman, however distant—since I am going abroad, in this great wicked, cruel city, to take his part and keep him right amidst the manifold temptations (that I should speak like Uncle Hill!) which are in waiting for him to close in round him and drag him down to perdition. Oh! it is so pitiful, with him so frank and free, poor Cousin Peter! so unthinking of evil, so kind as you have been forced to admit. Ah! Cherry, you must have a hard heart."

"But, but," protested Cherry, stammering in her distress and trembling all over, "he is not a fool, he knoweth right from wrong, he can seek the grace of God, which is for every man, to fight his foes. His friends have not been frightened to trust him here, and he hath not gone astray up to this time, so far as I can

tell. I am four years younger than he; moreover, how could I help him if I went with thee to France and left him behind here in London?" asked Cherry pertinently.

"He knows, or he will know in time," said Frances confidently. Then she added severely, "I am not a heathen that thou shouldst twit me with the grace of God, Cherry Norton, and how dost thou know," she started off with an audacious adaptation of Cherry's argument, "that the grace of God may not be guiding him even now, to secure the thought of you to hold him steady and constant to duty? Some day he would have you to reign with him at Three Elms. What a squire Peter Thornhurst will make when his comb is cut! his country breeding, his strong frame, his love of farming and sport will all be so many counts in his favour then. I ain't certain that the camp, for which my George was born, would not pall on Cousin Peter in time, though he is wild about it, like other youngsters, to begin with. But he is cut out for a stout squire, country justice and captain of the train-bands, and I do not know another girl, not sister Bab herself, who would make a wiser, gentler and more content madam to my squire than thou wouldst, Cherry."

"No, no!" denied Cherry, catching at any straw, "I am town bred; I know little or nought of the country."

"But thou lovest it and canst learn," insisted the temptress. "The truth is, you and Bab are not of the stuff that maids-of-honour are made of; and you would not have me ware you on the starvation of a country parsonage, which poor Peter roughed in his young days, to teach him what his comfortable hall and his wife's dainty parlour are worth when he is in his prime. Oh, Cherry! I think I see you in your still-room and in your linen press at Christmas and Easter, dispensing cloth cloaks and babies' long clothes, drugs and cordials to the poor for six miles round. You will sing to your harpsichord, as you will learn from the best masters in France, work at your needle, read romances on week days and Jeremy Taylor on Sundays. It is as well that I shall be in exile, for I could not hold a candle to you. But I want the stir and excitement of a city and the glamour of a court, if I can get it—I want opposition and rivalry. Lord! I'm not peaceful and meek, I'll be a bit of a firebrand wherever I go—but you, you'll be as happy as the day is long and a blessing to the whole neighbourhood—not to say to the man who gets you."

Cherry began to cry; she did not know what else to do, she was so amazed and bewildered. At the sight of her tears the baby set up a whimper which increased the confusion in the girl's mind and brought down upon her an energetic "Stop that, Cherry!" from the little mistress of the ceremonies.

"But his people would never hear of such a thing," Cherry tried to say through her arrested sobs, "even if Peter Thornhurst hath lost heart himself and wants a girl to back him."

"Cherry!" said Frances indignantly, "have you never read in your Bible that a man leaves father and mother and cleaves to his wife? Peter hath left them already, and it is not a mother, but a step-mother and a half-breed of brothers and sisters who are in question. That must make a great difference in such duty and service as he owes them."

"I don't know that," objected Cherry; "Peter is very fond of his little brothers and sisters, and he says his step-mother hath been a mother to him ever since she came to the Parsonage. He was wanting to show me how he was accustomed to play ball with Jenny and Joan, and I could have liked a game, if I could have spared the half-hour. Oh, Cousin Frances! we are but a boy and girl, he and I!" broke out Cherry, twisting and untwisting her brown fingers, "for all he wears a sword, and Aunt Hill says it will soon be time I changed my cap for a top-knot. It is grown men and women who marry; it would be little short of a wicked farce for such a solemn ceremony to be performed between Peter Thornhurst and me."

"You are out there, if you think such marriages don't take place many a time," said Frances with all the easy confidence of superior knowledge. "There was the late king's daughter, Princess Mary, she was not above ten when she was wed to the Prince of Orange, and I have heard tell it was a pretty sight, and they were a most happy couple till death did divide them. Have you not heard me speak of the little Duchess of Monmouth? She is no older than you, no, nor is the little Duchess of Grafton. You are in high company, Mrs. Norton, if so be you marry Cousin Peter. But the finest story of all is that of my young Lady March, who is not so young now, but she was just in her teens when she and Lord March were married in haste to suit their two fathers and their lands, in the middle of the civil war, which parted them for a time. Then my lord was fain to rue his part of the bargain——"

"Oh, yes! cousin," cried Cherry excitedly.

"Wait, it is ill-mannered to interrupt my tale. He would not return at the Restoration. He was in no hurry to embrace his wife, whom he would not have known though he had seen her, so it seems. For when he did appear in London and went to the King's theatre, whom should he spy but a beautiful young woman in one of the boxes he could not take his eyes off! He did not think he had ever beheld her before, and he could not guess who she might be. When he asked a stranger, he was told she was my Lady March, one of the reigning beauties of the day. I trow he did not tarry then to pay his duty to his wife, and I was advised they are the fondest husband and wife in the kingdom."*

* Frances might have added, if she had known the end of the story, the attachment between Lord and Lady March was so strong and lasting that when, after a number of years, one of the two died, the other, overwhelmed with grief, did not survive the bereavement many days.

"I cannot compass what Uncle and Aunt Hill and the children will do, even though they wish me to go," said Cherry forlornly.

"A fig for the Hills!" cried Frances impatiently. "They ought to be able to manage for themselves by this time—you are bound to leave them as Cousin Peter is leaving his father and mother. But wait till you are the lady of Three Elms and then you can have the whole Hill family down in a body at your place. Rather you than me," with a lively shrug, "but that is neither here nor there. Thou mayst let Uncle Hill preach himself hoarse, denouncing the sins of the nation to the cottagers, and give the peats of children—sick Peter and the rest—treats of bird-nesting and blackberry hunting and nutting, like you were so pleased with at Holywell. I don't fancy the squire—your Peter, I mean—would raise any obstacle, if so be his madam was pleased."

Cherry, for the first time in the conversation, blushed scarlet. She knew Peter was a good lad, she had frequently been obliged to him for his kind offices, but now a sudden overpowering sense of the magnitude of his generosity in his being willing to do so much for her, came over her.

Frances was still improving her opportunity. "The Hills! the Hills!" she exclaimed derisively and with a pout. "Who and what are the Hills, I should like to know? Name anybody save them—always their convenience to be put first. Dost care nought for me, Cherry, and my little Bess you've pretended to be fond of, away from all our friends, perchance sick and sorry, perchance drawing our last breath in a strange country? But little you would care so that you had your precious Hills."

"Cousin Frances, don't speak like that," cried the girl passionately. "You know I would rather be with you than with anybody; you know I would be proud—it would be the greatest pleasure of my life to do aught for you. If Peter is so kind as to wish this (but we must take care he is not left straitened for means; he is a man, he is none so good a manager), if it will serve him in the long run—oh I wish I knew what I ought to do," cried Cherry in the greatest perplexity.

"Do what Peter and I wish," counselled Frances. "If I were you I'd as lief follow our lead as that of the Hills, who cannot keep you any longer, and what is to become of you otherwise it beats me to say."

"It is not about me," said Cherry simply. "What matters it for me? I could be a child's maid, sure, somebody would have me. But if I could help Bet Ball to wait on you and this dear baby, and make the voyage more bearable for you—Heaven grant I be not sick myself, who have been on no water bigger than the river—I would be fit to fling myself overboard sooner than be a burden to you, but I might keep well and strong since I've always been healthy—if I could cheer you up when you were lonesome in

France, then it might be right to marry Peter—he soliciting it,” she ended pensively.

All that was left was to get the consent of Peter’s father, which would insure the acquiescence of such guardians as the Hills, who had too much to do looking after themselves to be over particular in the disposal of Cherry Norton. When it came to that, according to the ordinary standard, she had much the best of it. The Hills knew Peter to be a worthy lad for his years, a sound Protestant if not an Anabaptist, and not altogether a soldier of fortune since he was likely to inherit the estate of Three Elms, whereas Cherry was a friendless, penniless orphan dependent on the good offices of those who were themselves in danger of being indebted to others for their daily bread.

But without the consent of the vicar of Crowbrook the grand scheme would not work; not only Peter, Cherry and the Hills would all draw back, no clergymen would perform the ceremony of marriage for minors in such circumstances. Solitary as the obstacle might be, it would be insuperable, since the parson, though a guileless, mooning scholar, was not precisely a Bedlamite, any more than he was a dead letter in the eyes of the law, and his brother the squire of Three Elms was exceedingly wide awake.

But Frances managed this as she managed everything else in the business. She arrested Peter, who had wandered back to her lodging in the utterly conglomerated state of mind of a man or rather of a lad who has committed himself to be one of the principals in a marriage, which he never so much as contemplated till it was thrust upon him, within the space of a week. At the same time he is totally uncertain whether the marriage will really come off as has been projected, or whether it will vanish the next minute like an airy gossamer seen by the light of the moon. She set him down at her standish and caused him to write a letter to his father under her direction.

It was a confused jumble of insinuations, inducements and obligations. It represented all which he and Mrs. Cherry Norton, of whom he had writ in describing the Hills’ household, owed to young Lady Hamilton. It dwelt on the supreme importance it was to Peter’s future fortunes that he should retain, and as it were confirm his friendship with the Hamilton family. They were people of the greatest consequence, first favourites with the King, though as soldiers they had by a temporary tyrannical interdict of the Parliament’s, to take service where the best was to be had, with great renown and high pay under King Louis. The Hamiltons would never lose sight of Peter if he were to do them a favour, and were to double the slight connection he had with them already through his cousin Hamilton, while their hostility was a misfortune to be dreaded. It was as good as the possession of a moderate fortune for a man to have a hold on the Hamiltons, such as Mrs. Cherry

Norton had through the great love borne her by the Thornhursts' kinswoman, young Lady Hamilton. In proof of the last, after the maid's expenses, her share in the barge to Gravesend, and in the passage money across the Channel, and in the *berline* or barge on the other side to Paris, were paid by her bridegroom or his relations, Lady Hamilton would undertake to keep her free of charge, treat her as an own sister, and see that her education was finished as it ought to be, until such time as her husband should see fit to claim her—the longer he was of doing so the better cousin Hamilton would be pleased. The letter went on to a dissertation on the charms and virtues of poor Cherry, ending with a brief question whether Peter ought not to seize the chance of settling in life so much to his advantage, with so little trouble and even less responsibility—settlements not so much as mentioned—till he was of an age to make a good wife with influential connections highly valuable to him! The incoherent epistle wound up with an urgent petition that the letter might be answered by the return of the carrier, as time and tide would wait for no man, and Lady Hamilton was or the eve of setting out on her journey, which could not be delayed. The Rev. Jedidiah Thornhurst read and re-read the extraordinary communication in his parsonage parlour, called, "Wife, wife, come and hear this strange piece of news," and rubbed his mild muddled forehead in vain in order to understand the affair. He got little assistance from his wife, a well-disposed but excitable woman, who kept crying, "Lord-a-mercy, Jenny, Joyce, Joan, Dolly, if our boy Peter ain't thinking of getting a wife," as if she had lost her wits.

The Rev. Jedidiah did not see how he was to give his consent to anything so preposterous as saddling a boy like Peter, whose beard had not even sprouted, with a wife who could be of no earthly use to him, seeing she was to depart forthwith to France and grow up there with the risk of her learning foreign tricks, however promising the young wench might be at present, and though their good cousin Hamilton, who had been so kind to her and Peter, was to take care of her, and would look after her principles without doubt. On the other hand, he did not see how he was absolutely to refuse his consent and make mortal enemies of these powerful Hamiltons, who might well mar his boy's future career, perhaps force a duel upon him and end his young days in a trice. Unfortunately, Three Elms was not within a long day's ride of Crowbrook, so that the disturbed parson could not repair to his brother the squire to have the benefit of his advice, and to let him have the voice in his nephew's affairs to which he was entitled.

Lastly, as the crowning catastrophe, no time was given to the Revd. Jedidiah to think—a process which in spite of his book learning was always slow and laboured where he was concerned. He was besought to write by the return carrier, who was to leave by daybreak the following morning.

In the strait the Revd. Jedidiah tried, as so many of us do in

our difficulties, to gain a breathing space by temporizing. He gave what sanguine people might take as a conditional consent, but charged his son Peter to do nothing further till he heard from him in full (after he had communicated with Peter's honoured uncle at Three Elms), which would be by the next carrier, leaving in another fortnight. Then he spent a whole paragraph of his hurried letter in a short homily on marriage—the gist of which was that it was a grave business which required all the wisdom a man could bring to bear on it, and he did not think that his son Peter was come to the years which entitled him to consider himself qualified to deal with the matter.

"Your worthy father hath consented," cried Frances with conviction, reading at a glance the letter which Peter brought her, the boy being still greatly exercised in spirit and unable to look Cherry in the face, even as Cherry was unable to look at him, for the last four or five days. "It is impossible for us to wait for another letter. We are not to be expected to dance attendance on any old crow down in Kent—I beg your pardon, cousin Peter—but we shall be half-way across the Channel by that time—that is, if we can escape the plaguy Hollanders. I must not fail Sir George, who expects me in Paris long within the month. I will take what responsibility is like to remain, upon myself. I must see Aunt Hill and Cousin Cherry instantly. There are clothes and things to furnish. Let me think, this is Monday, we had better say Friday for the ceremony, since we must sail this day se'ennight without fail. Nay, marrying on Friday won't do, I'd as lief meet a hare at starting; let it be Saturday, which will allow another twenty-four hours to a sewing woman. Perchance Uncle Hill will not enter a church any more than if it were a mosque, and in that case we'll have to seek for another man to give Cousin Cherry away in her uncle's name. My brother Anthony is still in the country and hath an obliging humour, he might undertake the job, but I'll see to it. I have a thousand things to do at the last moment, but thou mayst safely depend on me, Peter, that I'll see to it," Frances ended with an airy assurance.

CHAPTER XII.

A SECOND WEDDING.

PETER and Cherry were actually married on the faith of the Revd. Jedidiah's halting letter and the consent given by the Hills, before an embargo could come from Kent. If there was any informality in the matter Frances was a person of sufficient audacity and influence in the world to make it pass. The ceremony took place in the presence of Frances and the Hills, whose consciences did not prove an obstacle. The husband and wife even brought

the bigger children into the polluted national church. One of Cherry's last efforts in their service was furbishing up the long coats and long frocks so as to pass muster, to the hardly repressed annoyance of Frances, who regarded the small fry as an eyesore in the presence of the more ornamental portion of the guests, including one or two of the Hamiltons and their cronies. These were tickled by the ludicrous account which Sir George's managing young madam gave of the marriage which was of her making, and of the tender ages of the bridegroom and the bride, therefore the fine folk elected to grace the occasion. They even, with the freehandedness of impecunious people, and the love of fun and frolic which distinguished the family, arranged that the wedding feast should be held in their house at Knightsbridge, and Peter and Cherry did not need their Cousin Frances to impress upon them that this was a great honour.

The scene of the wedding was one of the old churches near Speedwell Lane, which perished in the fire of London. It was the first of September, a baking hot and tinder dry morning, at the close of a hot, dry summer. Everybody was gasping for air and for even the little freshness which the moisture of a passing shower, falling on the dusty, ill-smelling stones and the blistering, scaling surface of the wood and plaster houses, would convey. But there was no cloud in the hard fixed blue of the sky, which had lasted long enough for the dwellers under it to crave gray shadows, mists and tempests. There was general talk of a great revival of the plague if the weather did not change speedily.

Frances was almost ready to welcome the sea-voyage at hand. As for Cherry, who was to be one of the travellers, she was far too mazed and dazed with the strange turn events had taken to be able to look beyond the present momentous hour—so much to any bride and at once so stunning and distracting to poor little Cherry.

A marriage attended by members of the quality, with a couple of fine coaches and three or four chairs at the church door, would have been sure in that City region to gather a small crowd of idle lookers-on, hanging about the porch and straggling into the aisles. But the fact which had got abroad that the bridegroom and bride were under age, a mere boy and girl, considerably increased the informal company. In spite of Frances's assertion that such marriages were frequent, they were, though permissible and lawful under certain conditions, a practice confined largely to the higher aristocracy. Even among the *élite* the practice was sufficiently uncommon to render its occurrence an event to the vulgar public. Inquisitive, interested men and women went out of their way and dawdled, wasting their time, to witness the marriage of Peter and Cherry. For the most part the spectators called it, quite enthusiastically, a sweetly pretty or vastly charming sight. For Peter, in his new regimentals with a lace cravat tied in a huge bow, and

his unruly hair combed back, pomatumed and powdered, was a likely enough lad, in spite of his broad nose far apart, and Cherry was absolutely charming. She was dressed up in a brocade of Frances's hastily made down for her. She carried the long train, in default of a page, over one trembling arm, and with the other hand swayed waveringly a feather fan. Her dark hair was twined into long curls looped up with pearls—more of Frances's "gallantry," as some of the writers of the day designed a woman's finery.

If the edified gazers could have seen nearer and farther they might have detected a certain strain of boyish sulkiness and desperation qualifying the manliness of Peter's air, something which might have been expressed in such rebellious reckless words as: "I'm in for it, and there's no way of getting out of it; here goes, 'twill soon be over." A close observer might have recognized that the youth gave but one hurried glance at Cherry, to whom at the same time he was as punctiliously polite as he knew how, and turned away with a still more bewildered, discomfited look than his face had worn hitherto. This was not the Cherry he had known in her short shabby frock and tumbled hood, for whom he had done a turn of work, with whom he would have romped when he was in the mood, if she would but have left off her scrubbing and cooking and tending of the younger children to play with him. This was not the drudge of a girl, done to death with over-work, to whom waiting on his cousin Hamilton would be a sinecure by comparison, while she would lighten that incomparable little lady's burden of loneliness and domestic care. This was as fine a lady as cousin Hamilton herself, a young princess for aught he knew; and what had he to do with young princesses? How had he been so misled and taken in? This was an utter stranger to him; this dressed-up, preoccupied young maid with the far-away look in her shy drooping eyes, and her soft round cheeks flushing and paling from red to white with alarming rapidity. What was he to make of her even for the couple of days that they were to be together? The Cherry he had been accustomed to had been a plain, companionable little wench, to whom he could speak almost as to a boy, whom he might have sent on his errands if she had not had too much to do without them. She was not, unless in the prospect of her early decline which had been flourished before him, a delicate creature like this. What was he to make of her, tied to him for the rest of his life, though by good luck kept at a distance from him, for a period of years which he should take care not to lessen? He had no desire for such a fine piece of goods; he supposed she would be fainting on his hands next; oh, what a thundering young fool he had been. What would his uncle at Three Elms say? He had not meant to think of a wife for half a score of years or more, till he had seen one or two campaigns, was old enough to be the head of a family, and strong and wise enough

to cope with such a ticklish relation. Then he would have chosen a strong hearty woman like mother down in Kent, who would look after herself and manage the household without troubling him. What he wanted now, if he could get it, was to get away from it all, so he thought, as his eye roamed over the heads of the group of which he formed an indispensable unit, past the surpliced clergyman and the clerk and the effigy of the knight in armour against the mildewed wall, up to a corner of a stained glass window, behind which the sun was glaring pitilessly, though its trapped beams fell dimly and duskily enough on the strange pair standing and kneeling in front of their friends. It was fantastic and unreal as the dream of a disordered mind. He would fain have been rid of every figure in it, of this metamorphosed Cherry, of Mr. Hill frowning and Mrs. Hill sniffing at the words of the service, and the children staring as if their goggle eyes would drop out of their heads, of the blandly gracious Hamiltons, even of his bewitching cousin, who had undone him by making him undertake responsibilities he had never dreamt of. Oh! to be back in the homely, simple Kent parish, among the single-hearted, slow-spoken, matter-of-fact friends of his boyhood, who were guiltless of being changed as by a fairy's wand, or of mystifying people or playing pranks of any kind. If he were at Crowbrook now, instead of in this noisy, gaudy, filthy London, of which he had thought so much first when he came to it, he would be tramping with his gun on his shoulder over the dewy stubble, with nothing on his mind save the bag of game he would take home to fill the parsonage larder before sundown.

But it would have been hard for the most eager, earnest watcher—unless it were a woman who was personally acquainted with the mystery of virgin love in its first ethereal dawn—a woman whose eyes were at once sharpened and purified by loss and sorrow—to trace to their source the indications of Cherry's fitfully changing colour, her eyes now shining like stars, now deeply shadowed as they fall beneath their modest lids, the thrill of her little hand, cold as death on the hot autumn day, and trembling like a leaf when it was put into Peter's burning hand. It would have taken such a tenderly, sadly wise woman to understand the trance into which the sensitive imaginative child had fallen, in which she had advanced as if she were walking in her innocent sleep to her fate.

There were very few persons there who were alive to the piteous barbarity of what so many called "a sweetly pretty, a vastly charming sight," else surely some chivalrous spirit would have started up to forbid the banns at the last moment. For it was tearing open the silken promise of the rosebud and wasting its faint immature fragrance on the coarse common air, heavy and pungent with the robust odours of strongly warring elements. It was profanely trifling with the most solemn obligations. It was

sacrilegiously invading with a bold, careless step the most holy sanctuary of the human heart, the door of which ought to have been kept jealously closed and guarded till God in nature gave the word to throw it wide. It was binding for what might be the long night of time, two inexperienced helpless human creatures, whose inexperience and helplessness ought to have been their most unassailable protection, who were incapable as yet of knowing themselves or each other, or of measuring the grand and sweet possibilities of that world on which they were just entering. The hapless couple might well end their union by dragging horrid chains instead of clasping genial ties, and hating with a fierce hatred what they should have loved with a tender love.

Such considerations did not for an instant disturb Frances's volatile and equally cool and confident mind, she was simply full of triumph at the success of her machinations, she was further fully persuaded that both her victims, especially her *protégée* Cherry, owed a debt of gratitude to their energetic, dauntless patroness.

Not even Mr. Francis Hill in his gloom was cognizant of the dubious nature of that September morning's work, else, to do him justice, he would never have consented to it. For if he was anything he was sternly righteous. But this was merely a marriage contract which was all in favour of his niece, Cherry Norton, about whose poor fortunes, powerless as he was to better them, or even to continue to maintain them at their present low level, he had occasionally fretted, as much as he ever did fret himself about worldly matters. But what were marriage contracts to the terrible issues of Eternity, to the passports to Heaven or to Hell, of which every man and woman had the acceptance or the rejection—a choice which was enough to occupy frail mortals? He felt a little vexed that Cherry, who was a good wench, as far as any unregenerate maid was good, should go with his niece by marriage—Frances Jennings, or Hamilton, a frivolous, unruly spirit, whether single or married—and with the Romanist Hamiltons, to a benighted country of dissolute Papists like France. But the younger girl had always entertained an infatuation for the elder, and there was no help for it. The Hamiltons and France formed but a fraction of humanity, and of the wicked world on which he had seen for some time that he must launch Cherry. With regard to Peter Thornhurst, to whom she was contracted, Francis Hill could only see him in the light of a safeguard and Godsend, without which he would have scrupled, hard bested as he was, to give up Cherry to the Hamiltons.

Peter and Cherry having been made one, were to spend the afternoon with Frances at her lodging, where her packing was completed, previous to being carried to hold their wedding feast at the Hamiltons'. This was a transparent ruse on the part of Frances to get rid of the Hills, of whose not very exhilarating

company she was heartily sick. Indeed, Mrs. Hill was deep "in the dumps." She could not refuse to let Cherry marry. Mrs. Hill's own marriage had not been very satisfactory, but she knew all girls were expected to marry when a tolerable offer came in their way; nevertheless she did not know what on earth she was to do without Cherry, and she could not be called on to rejoice at her own stranded position. Frances caught at the first pretence for turning her back on her lachrymose aunt.

Lady Hamilton's contribution to the festivities of the day was to take the bridegroom and bride in their marriage splendour, a spectacle to be appreciated in Hyde Park, where many a noble young couple before them had magnanimously shown themselves. But unfortunately Lady Hamilton encountered some of her acquaintances, to whom she had to present the youthful pair, and she could not resist sending them to walk on in front, while she fell back to follow with her friends, and make game of the sheepishness of the bridegroom and the unheard-of sedateness of the bride. Peter saw what his Cousin Hamilton was about, and his eyes, which were beginning to be opened, were still further enlightened, till he was on the eve of open revolt, and of flinging himself away from the whole foolish business.

Cherry awoke in part also, a sad awakening. She was accustomed to her cousin's inconsiderateness and love of her own amusement far beyond her friends' peace of mind. She was also in the habit of swallowing these characteristics as part of Frances, with blind devotion. But here was Peter Thornhurst fuming like a grown man who is entitled to respect, while she, Cherry, on her wedding day, had not only to stand the affront of being laughed at, she had to smooth down the ruffled plumes of her partner, who, under his unusual politeness, was tetchy and unlike himself, would not be appeased, and hardly let her speak to him. Poor little bride! it was a bad beginning and a poor look-out for her. She had not lived so long in the house with her plighted husband as not to know that his temper was not his strong point, but she had never before seen him so ruffled and unreasonable. She was driven to fear that when the fit was upon him he was moodier and more prone to wrath even than her Uncle Hill. Happily for Cherry, she was gentle and patient by nature, and had served a long apprenticeship to submission. She was accustomed, even when she had to bear a peevish woman's murmurs, to give the man of the house *carte blanche* for yet more violent humours, to which the woman and the children had as a matter of course to submit, and be thankful when the storm abated. Cherry's idea of the part which a wife had to play in such circumstances was to say indulgently, "Poor Jonas! or poor Humphrey! he has risen off his wrong side. He is out of sorts; things have gone wrong with him; he will be the first to be sorry when the blast has blown over."

It was better when the little party got to the Hamiltons' for the banquet. Peter recalled his best manners to master his dudgeon. He might have been thankful that his cousin Hamilton did not yet see it. Now that her point was gained she would have made sport of it likewise. She would have drawn out the angry lad's grievance, and teased and baited him till he was half mad. But the exquisite breeding of the Hamiltons came to the relief of their young guests. If the hosts laughed at them, as such laughter-loving people could scarcely fail to do, it would be so thoroughly in the laughers' sleeves, with such courtesy and pleasantness, that the most irate, bashful lad or lass, in place of taking umbrage, would be restored to self-complacency.

The old glamour of these gallant, gay men and fair, bright women charmed the evil spirit in Peter. Cherry had no evil spirit in her to be laid at rest; she was there to be won from her sleep-walking to marvel and admire, to be not so much flattered as touched to the quick, by the gracious friendliness of the delicate flattery which was so perfect in its art as to sound absolutely sincere.

Moreover, neither Peter nor Cherry was beyond the age, or had been too sated by luxuries to relish the banquet of which they were the hero and heroine. The dainty French dishes, the sugared cakes, the bon-bons, the succory water, the spiced posset, had each and all a full appreciation.

The crown was given to the condescension when the elegant Comte de Grammont deigned to propose the health of his dear young friends the bride and bridegroom in a speech of high-flown compliment, the like of which was not to be heard on this side Calais. Cherry was profoundly impressed, yet she could not help liking better a word or two about "the young sir" and "the little madam," dropped by Anthony Hamilton. There was a ring of simplicity in the good-natured, easy-going kindness of the refined literary vagabond which struck her, child as she was.

It was just after these speeches that a turn was given to the conversation and a slight sensation created by an old French serving-man coming in, and, with the respectful familiarity and fluency of his nation and class, volubly calling the attention of the company to the fact that London was burning.

"It is a bonfire to celebrate your marriage, sir and madam," said Frances, making a low courtesy, for, like the rest of the people there, she regarded the servant's speech as a Gallic exaggeration.

But when Peter and some of the gentlemen were seeing Lady Hamilton and Mrs. Peter Thornhurst—how Cherry's heart throbbed and fluttered at the strange, inappropriate title! to the lodgings of the former, walking by the ladies' chairs in singularly clear, dry moonlight, all agreed that the fire to which the lackey had referred was bigger than usual, and must be burning beyond Mark Lane.

"Heaven grant it reach not Speedwell Lane," Cherry ventured to say, with such trepidation and anguish in her voice that though Frances rallied her, saying that her home was no longer there, and that Speedwell Lane and its inhabitants must look after themselves, Peter took pity on her. He had made up his mind to quit the Hills' when Cherry went on their marriage, and had already hired a lodging nearer his parade ground. Now he was moved to assure her that he would start forthwith to see if the fire were near the Hills', and would bring her word the first thing in the morning, before church time.

"Thank you, very much," said Cherry gratefully, and added in the next breath the imploring charge, "But, oh! take care of yourself, Peter!"

Frances tittered, and Cherry hung her head; since the moonlight was bright enough for her to distinguish not only that the polite gentlemen in their train smiled in concert, but that in return for her anxious care a thunder-cloud gathered on Peter's brow.

(To be continued.)

SOCIAL ECHOES.

By MRS. HUMPHRY.

THE recent correspondence on "Music at Home," in a daily paper, was an amusing illustration of the different view taken of the same thing by different persons. "One man's meat is another man's poison," says the old adage. The suggestion that unsuccessful musicians should be engaged to dispense the charms of sweet sounds at so much per hour in private houses, elicited a few approving letters. Whence could these have come? For the majority of us the world is far too full of music, or rather of what passes for such. Are we not all weary of the pianos of our neighbours? When balmy airs of spring follow upon the dull cold of winter, do not our open windows, flung wide to admit the welcome visitor, let in, as well, the "skirls" of some aspirant for lyric fame, who practises her top notes in the modern manner, *i.e.*, by making her mouth absolutely square, and emitting her vocal sounds with an energy that makes her eyes almost start forth from their sockets. When she has finished, the tale is taken up by half-a-dozen pianos, and when the exhausted listener is just beginning to recover from these, a melancholy young man begins to deliver his plaintive soul upon the flute, or, worse still, the cornet. With a few barrel-organs and a German band thrown in, the average dweller in towns has quite too much of music, without hiring the failures of the overcrowded profession for "an hour or two in the afternoon."

Too much music? Could one ever have even enough? Never. But what goes by the name nowadays too often offends both ear and understanding. Singers are not applauded for an exquisitely sweet and simple rendering of some theme that touches the heart, as they were some forty years ago. No! It is somebody's E in alt., a horrible scream, accompanied by a grimace as terrible, that excites the enthusiasm of the modern audience. A few singers—all honour to them!—charm the senses with their softly melodious interpretation of songs within the natural compass of their voices. To artists like these it would be a grave error of taste to attempt a harsh shriek on a top note, or a husky muffled murmur on a low one, when either feat is performed at the sacrifice of melody and sweetness. The art of the true singer occupies itself with perfecting the range of notes that Nature has given. Those who practise for months a note or two beyond their register,

seriously injure their voices, and permanently rob their middle notes of that quality of velvety softness that appeals so irresistibly to the ear of taste.

I shall never forget seeing a learned professor show a young lady how to sing a certain note, and watching the two faces as each alternately disfigured itself in the production of a frightful sound, a daughter of Discord, having no smallest affinity with music. The master's mouth opened square, and the air was filled with the horrid noise he made. The pupil took up the theme, and from a huge orifice where two pretty lips had been smiling a moment before, issued a cry that I can at this moment recall, so shrill and ear-piercing it was. "Good!" said the master, "but we can do better still," and from their own point of view they certainly did. Has the goddess of Harmony forsaken the earth? And is Discord masquerading in her stead? It is certain that one very rarely hears true music, numerous as are the concerts given and enthusiastic as are the audiences. Agility of voice or finger is worshipped. Elaboration is preferred in simplicity's stead. Sweetness is lost sight of in the craving for cleverness. These crowds who cram the concert-rooms find little to delight them in the song of the lark, the mellow note of the thrush, and the wonderful whistle of the blackbird, who puts his own heart and ours into three witching notes. The human voice has a sweetness beyond all these, but the fashionable singing of the hour cares little for mere sweetness. Yet, when all is said, what else does music mean?

Sir Arthur Sullivan has shown himself once more a true artist in his admirable music to "Macbeth" at the Lyceum. Never once do the soft sounds obtrude themselves in the incidental portions, though they surround the sombre play with a charm that it certainly lacks. The brilliant *première* of the 29th of December will not soon be forgotten by those who were present. The Lyceum may be said to have contained all that was best in the circles of literature and art. Had some untoward accident engulfed that one small spot of London on that particular occasion even Mr. Grossmith could hardly have said of the audience that "they never would be missed." Whatever may be the various opinions as to Mr. Irving's Macbeth and Miss Ellen Terry's Lady Macbeth, no one who can possibly manage to see the play should fail to do so. It is the greatest triumph of stage management and thoroughness of detail that the world has ever seen. The noiseless and rapid movement of the heavy scenes falls but little short of marvellous, and the succession of beautiful pictures throughout the play serves to relieve it of much of its inevitable gloom. Miss Ellen Terry never looked more graceful or more lovely; in her mediæval robes she suggested rather Tennyson's Elaine than the fierce and ambitious Lady Macbeth, and the wistful tenderness of her expression was often at variance with

the words of her part. This gentle lady cannot be awful and "unsexed," and no one could find fault with her for the incapacity. Mr. Alexander's acting as Macduff was the chief dramatic success of the evening, more particularly in the scene where he learns that his wife and children have been murdered.

One of the prettiest plays that have ever been put on the stage for the amusement of children is Miss Rosina Filippi's "Little Goody Two-Shoes," produced at the Court Theatre by Mrs. John Wood. It is played by children, of whom a carefully trained company has been got together. The moral is as unimpeachable as it is unobtrusive. The shoes that the farmer finds in his pocket and gives to little "Goody" are of scarlet kid: this one touch shows that some one who understands children has been at the helm. The sigh of ecstasy uttered by a little girl seated near me when these shoes first appeared was from the heart. The scene representing the Land of Leisure is remarkably pretty, the arrangement of colours being very artistic. The costume of the small queen of this country, Miss Flimsy, made a deep impression upon the youthful audience. The little girl who plays this part is extremely clever, and has no trace of the Cockney twang which mars the pronunciation of the others. This invincible twang is the only difficulty that Mrs. Wood and Miss Filippi have not overcome; it is ineradicable from the speech of the London child. The good fairies are all blondes; the bad ones all wear very dark hair—this is decidedly hard upon brunettes. Harmony, however, has dark hair, and her part is as sweet as her plaintive singing. The play is as great a success as it well deserves to be.

To those who are fond of sport I recommend "Fishing in Strange Waters," by Mr. Edward Kennard. The name of this gifted amateur is already known to the public through the various interesting drawings he has from time to time supplied to the *Illustrated London News*, *Graphic*, &c. He has now brought together a most delightful series of sketches, representing the gentle art of angling in all its forms, and giving lifelike representations of the fair northern land, famous for its green rushing rivers and mighty snow-clad mountains. The first edition having been quickly exhausted, a second is now to be issued, with letter-press by the artist, which will add greatly to its interest. The volume is written in a terse, vigorous and classical style not frequently met with in these degenerate times.

Beecham, the well-known proprietor of "Beecham's Pills," has issued a Christmas Annual which is one of the most extraordinary penny publications ever issued. It contains tales by first-class authors like "Ouida," Jessie Fothergill, George R. Sims, R. E. Francillon, R. M. Ballantyne, G. Manville Fenn, &c., &c. and the magazine is copiously illustrated. It also contains the last tale written by the late Hugh Conway, and a new quadrille arranged on popular lines, and all this for a penny!

LONDON SOCIETY.

MARCH, 1889.

“SHEBA.”

A STUDY OF GIRLHOOD.

By “RITA,”

AUTHOR OF “DAME DURDEN,” “DARBY AND JOAN,” “THE LADY NANCY,”
“GRETCHEN,” ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXV.

FROM POETRY TO PROSE.

THEY wandered on here and there through the vast space of the Sydney park, and talked as freely as old friends might have talked. To Sheba those hours were enchanted. She had never met any one who knew so much, or had had such varied experiences. Then it was altogether a new sensation to be treated like a grown-up young lady, and with such consideration and delicacy as belongs only to what now-a-days one seldom meets—a gentleman who *is* a gentleman in thought, and word, and action. He expressed no curiosity at finding her rambling alone in a public park at such an early hour in the morning, but he was a little surprised all the same, and wondered if the girl had quite a happy home. He thought not, for the young face was too sad and thoughtful for her years, and in the deep, dark eyes he seemed to read the troubles of a soul but ill-content.

She interested him—but no more than that. She was not beautiful, and had none of those dainty, feminine, capricious ways which he knew so well, and despised so utterly.

At last it occurred to Sheba that she ought to be turning homewards, and the prose of that fact broke the enchanted spell of their wonderful morning.

Her new friend went out to the gates with her, but then their ways diverged. He held out his hand. “I wonder,” he said, “if I might be permitted to call on you at your home.”

To Sheba it was as if a throned monarch had suddenly expressed

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a wish to visit her. Her face showed only too plainly the delight she felt.

"Oh, do you mean it?" she said eagerly. "How proud, how glad I should be——"

"Would your mother wonder how I made your acquaintance?" he said; "she does not know of the waterfall, though she heard me last night."

Sheba coloured and felt confused. "What shall I tell her?" she asked.

He answered that question by another: "Is she at all like you?"

"I—I think not," said the girl wonderingly. "She always tells me I am utterly unlike her, but I am sure she would be delighted to know you. She admired your singing so much."

"Oh!" he said. "I know what *that* means. Never mind, I will get an introduction to her. We are sure to meet soon, and it's as well to observe *les convenances*."

He released her hand after one quick look into the deep, soft eyes that met his own so frankly.

Then Sheba glanced down at the child. "Won't he be tired?" she said. "He has walked a long way."

"Oh, he is used to that," said his father. "He goes everywhere with me. He is quite a well-known character at the theatre and he never troubles any one. Do you, Paul?"

The little fellow looked up at the handsome down-bent face with such an expression of adoring love that it brought tears to Sheba's eyes. He made no answer in words, only took his father's hand in his, and mutely pressed it to his lips.

And as Sheba went homewards through the glow and radiance of the bright young day she saw that scene repeat itself again and again. What love, what perfect confidence existed between those two! "Oh," cried her longing heart, "will no one ever love me like—that?"

* * * * *

They were all at breakfast when she arrived. Mrs. Levison looked up impatiently as she entered the room.

"Late again," she said. "I wish, if you are so fond of morning walks, you would learn to be in punctually. And I wish you would give up that habit of rambling about by yourself; it was all very well in the bush, but it doesn't do here, in a town. It is not—not ladylike."

"Sheba doesn't care about being ladylike," piped Miss Dolly's shrill voice; "she told me so, and she says she won't go to a ball if she has to wear a crinoline!"

Mr. Levison burst out laughing, and under cover of his mirth Sheba drank her coffee—caring very little for the remarks or the laughter. She was quite happy; they could not spoil her golden morning, or the memory of last night.

"Well," said her step-father, when his amusement at his daughter's cleverness had in some degree subsided, "and what did you think of the opera, eh? Rather a decent singer that tall chap, wasn't he? Rum idea, though, for a man to paint his face, and dress up in all sorts of ridiculous garments, and shout away at the top of his voice for two or three hours. To me opera is always idiotic. The idea of singing out to a crowd of people that you love a girl, or are going to kill your rival, or poison your mother-in-law, or march to battle, or assassinate your king—downright nonsense, you know. Such stuff shouldn't be allowed."

Sheba's face grew scarlet—talk of two sides to a question. Here was indeed the prose to her poetic idyl. Before she could give vent to her indignation, however, Mrs. Levison chimed in:

"You talk very absurdly," she said. "Opera is quite one of the things of fashionable life. Royalty has always patronized it, and in fact the London season wouldn't be the season without the Italian opera. I am only too pleased to think Sydney is waking up to the fact of its importance."

"Oh," said Mr. Levison, "if it pleases you, all right. I don't object to all their fal-lals and tra-la-la's. I only said what it sounded like to me. I'd a thousand times sooner see a good play with a thundering murder in it."

"Hand me over the newspaper, Sheba," said Mrs. Levison languidly. "I want to see what they say of the performance. I'm sure to be asked what I thought of Riola's singing, so I must read the criticism."

"Won't it be better to say what you *did* think of it," said Sheba with her usual downright injudiciousness. "The critic's opinion isn't yours."

"It will be mine when I've read it," said her mother sharply. "It is always best to trust to the judgment of people who understand these matters. Now a musical critic is paid for his work, and I suppose he understands what he undertakes. Therefore his opinion is useful—in a measure."

"It is only the opinion of one man," persisted Sheba. "Why should it be set up as better than that of all the hundreds who heard the music last night. If they hadn't liked it, or appreciated it, they would never have applauded as they did. They had no critic to tell them when to do so and when not——"

"Now, Sheba," snapped her mother, "for gracious sake don't begin your arguments. You are perfectly dreadful. It isn't right or—decent for a girl of your age to be always airing her own opinions, and before people older and more experienced than herself. I never dreamt of such a thing when I was a girl."

"But what she said wasn't bad," chuckled Mr. Levison, rubbing his fat, coarse hands together; "'pon my word, it wasn't bad. I really think she had the best of you—upon my word I do."

"Oh," said Mrs. Levison, rising with dignity. "Of course, if I

am to be insulted at my own table by my own daughter and my own husband, it is best for me to retire. Come, Dolly, my pet, I don't want your young ideas to be contaminated."

"I don't care," said Dolly; "I want to stay with my papa, and you are not nearly so kind to me when I'm with you alone as you are when he's there."

Mrs. Levison retreated precipitately after that speech. She did not tell Miss Dolly not to argue with her elders. Her father was so delighted with her sharpness that he took her on his knee and gave her a new bright half-crown as a reward.

"She's my own child, all over," he exclaimed, chuckling audibly. "She knows what two and two make, don't you, puss; and how did *you* like the opera, eh?"

"It was very funny," said the child. "I liked the skating though, and I liked the man in the white cloak; I thought he was lovely. I'd like to know him. Why don't you ask him to come here?"

Sheba felt her face flushing hotly.

"Ask him—here," said Mr. Levison; "why, what an odd fancy. What should we do with him? A dressed-up stage doll, hired for so much a night. I should have to pay him if he came, and I can get much more entertaining people for nothing."

Sheba sprang to her feet. The vulgarity and pomposity of that speech, fired her with indignation.

"I think," she said proudly, "you scarcely know you are talking of a gentleman."

"Hoity, toity!" exclaimed her step-father. "And pray what do you know of the matter? *Gentleman*, indeed. As if a gentleman would do such a thing as turn stage-puppet and squeak out so many tunes for so many guineas a night. That shows how much you know about the matter. Dolly could tell you better than that, eh, Dolly? You know what makes a gentleman, don't you?"

"Money," said Miss Dolly confidently. "Lots of money; millions of money, eh, papa?"

"Of course," he said, laughing heartily, "money—that's power—and rank—and success now-a-days. Never you marry any one who hasn't got it."

"I should think not indeed!" exclaimed the child, tossing her fair cloud of hair with scorn. "But Sheba is so old-fashioned and silly. She told me the other day she hated the very name of wealth, and that all rich people seemed made up of vulgarity and pretence!"

"Oh indeed, young madam, is that your opinion?" sneered Mr. Levison, putting down the child and rising from the breakfast table. "Then let me tell you it is damned ungrateful, to say the least of it, to make such remarks on people but for whose charity you would have been a beggar! yes, a beggar. Here you've lived and been fed, and clothed, and kept in idleness and luxury, and

all the thanks you give is to make remarks like those behind my back!"

Sheba grew white as death. The child's statement was true, but she had made it more in reference to Mr. Levison's circle of friends, than himself.

"I should like to know who you are to give yourself such airs," continued her step-father, with rising anger. "I've had about enough of them, I can tell you. If you were independent it might be excused, but when I pay for the very clothes on your back, the very food you eat——"

"Stop," cried Sheba passionately, "you needn't say any more. You know it was no wish of mine to live under your roof. I only obeyed my mother's commands. After such an expression of your views, it is scarcely necessary for me to say I will not accept another favour! I have always wished to be independent. I am young and strong, and I can work for my own bread. I will do so at the very earliest opportunity; I will not live under your roof an hour longer than is necessary."

His loud contemptuous laughter rang out and drowned her words.

"Work. . . *You*, oh Lord, that is a joke! Why, you don't know anything that's useful; you are always dreaming over your poetry, and such like rubbish. That sort of thing's no good in the colonies let me tell you. If you could cook, and scour, and wash, you might have a chance of earning a livelihood, but with such trumpery talents as yours—pooh—you'd best go on the stage, and paint your face and spout poetry. Perhaps this Signor—Signor Propheto, or whatever his name is, will help you."

Sheba stayed to hear no more, but swept out of the room, proud and indignant as a young goddess.

Often as she and her step-father had come into collision in the matter of opinions, he had never before expressed himself so coarsely. She felt stung to the very core of her being, as she thought that it was to this man she owed food, clothing, shelter. One by one his words came back to her as she paced to and fro her room, and every recurrence seemed only to bring a deeper disgust and a clearer meaning.

"I will not live on his money any longer," she cried passionately. "I *will* not. He says I cannot work . . . well, we shall see."

She leant her head on her hands, and for a few moments gave herself up to thought. Something, some memory, vague and misty, was floating through her brain, the recollection of some advertisement she had seen and noticed; but where was it? Ah, in the paper of the previous day. She must get it.

As she moved to the door she heard quick steps in the passage beyond. She looked out, and saw Dolly.

"Dolly," she cried eagerly, "come here. I want you to fetch me yesterday's *Herald* from the library."

"Why don't you go yourself?" cried the child pertly. "I am not going to run your messages; you were very rude to my papa, and he has gone away in a very bad temper. You are a silly. He won't give you a new dress now for the ball on the 20th."

"I don't want his dresses, or his presents," exclaimed Sheba wrathfully. "You are just like him. All you think of is money; it is the one god that all you Jews worship. Much good may it do you when you come to die!"

Dolly stared at her.

"Oh, you *are* in a temper," she said. "I will tell mamma to come to you, you shouldn't get into tempers. It's very wicked, and you do look so ugly!"

But Sheba had lost all patience; she gave the child a stinging box on the ears which sent her howling off to her step-mother's boudoir, and then she went to the library herself and sought out the *Sydney Herald* with the advertisement she had noticed on the previous day.

She found it at last and sat down to read it over carefully. "A gentleman wishes to engage a daily governess for his little boy, aged four. One who would accompany him in his walks and be with him from the hours of ten to five. Apply personally, or by letter to Herr Franz Müller, 18, Fort Street, Sydney, any day this week. Salary—£40."

Sheba seized pen and paper and immediately dashed off an application for the post. £40 a year meant independence. Surely she could provide her own food and clothes with that, even if she must live under this hated roof. But then she suddenly remembered the Saxtons were coming over to Sydney very shortly, and perhaps they would let her board with them. If so——

Her train of thought was here roughly interrupted. Her mother entered, followed by Dolly, who was weeping spasmodically.

"What is this I hear?" exclaimed Mrs. Levison stormily. "You have insulted my husband, you have struck this poor little child. What do you mean by such conduct; are you out of your senses?"

"Your husband insulted me," cried Sheba. "He called me a beggar, fed by his charity."

"And so you are," said her mother in a fury. "So you are, and you haven't even the grace to be civil, or behave decently to your benefactor."

Sheba's face grew cold and hard.

"I came here," she said, "at your desire and because I thought it my duty to obey you. But I will not live under the roof of a man who flings his charity at me as if I were a starving dog. I have borne the life here as patiently as I could; but to-day he bade me earn my own bread, and I will take him at his word. As soon as ever I can get a situation——"

"Situation!" sneered Mrs. Levison, "the idea of your getting a situation! Why, you don't know a single useful thing. If you want to be independent you had better apply for a servant's place. It's about all you're fit for."

"Perhaps," said Sheba proudly, "I am a better judge of what I am fit for than—you; you know very little of me, really. You never cared, and you care less now than ever you used to do."

"How—how *dare* you say such things!" cried her mother furiously, stung by an unpalatable truth. "Care, indeed! I have cared a great deal too much for a selfish, ungrateful girl who has been nothing but a worry and anxiety to me, ever since she was born!"

"I will relieve you of both," said Sheba coldly, "as soon as ever I can get something to do. I have just applied for a situation as governess; if I get it——"

Mrs. Levison fairly screamed with laughter, and Dolly echoed it.

"If you get it; I should think it was 'if' indeed!"

The girl moved a little away. Her eyes were dark with anger and wounded pride—her lips quivered slightly.

"I may get it," she said, "and if I do, I will not live under Mr. Levison's roof another hour."

"Oh! isn't she a silly," piped Dolly in her shrill little voice, "isn't she a silly, silly, silly? When she might have dresses, and jewels and go to balls—and then to choose to work!" She began to dance to and fro, clapping her fat hands. "I shall be so glad if you go," she said; "papa will give me the dresses instead, and he won't be half so cross as he is now. You always make him cross, you are so proud and so cold and stuck up. He often says he'd never have married your mother, if he had known what you were like."

Mrs. Levison grew scarlet. "Be quiet, Dolly," she said, for there was something in Sheba's white, disgusted face that frightened her a little. Before she could say any more, the girl took up the letter she had written and left the room.

Mrs. Levison threw herself down on the couch and began to cry. She was furious with Sheba for making all this disturbance. Things had been going on so smoothly, and now, here they were all upset just through one of her tempers, as if her life was not hard enough without all these disturbances. Mr. Levison was not a bad husband, but then he was certainly not a gentleman, and he did grate upon her occasionally; and then he knew such a lot of horrid Jews and he would insist upon her asking them to dinner, and they were so dreadful, especially the women, who powdered their faces till they looked like clown's masks, and dressed so loudly and always would play cards for money, which was quite against her principles, more especially as she always lost whenever she did it.

So she lay there crying and fretting and grumbling until she had worked up a headache, and then took herself off to her own room and had the blinds drawn down and steeped herself in eau-de-Cologne, and sal volatile, and agreed that if ever there was a Christian martyr of the nineteenth century, that martyr existed in her own proper person.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SHEBA RESOLVES TO BE INDEPENDENT.

IN a large room somewhat barely furnished, but light and airy and with one large window commanding a view of the harbour with its fairy islands, and passing vessels, an old man sat at a table copying music. He had a fine face, framed in by long iron-grey hair, which gave him a somewhat *bizarre* appearance. He was writing busily, and humming a tune from time to time, when a knock at the door interrupted him.

"*Herein!*—come in, I mean," he cried with a strong German accent.

"A young lady, sir, to see you," said a voice—the voice of the domestic of the lodgings recently taken by Herr Franz Müller, and Paul Meredith, of the Italian Opera Co.

"A young lady!" He lifted his head and tossed back the long loose hair. "Oh! . . . Very possibly; show her in, my good *Mädchen*, show her in."

The girl drew aside, and in the doorway stood a tall and slender figure—the figure of a girl—who advanced slowly and somewhat hesitatingly into the long low room. She had a letter in her hand.

"Am I speaking to Herr Franz Müller?" she asked.

"But, certainly, *mein Fräulein*; to what do I owe the pleasure?"

"I saw your advertisement in the *Sydney Herald* of yesterday," she said gravely and earnestly; "I wrote an answer to it, but on second thoughts it seemed to me I had better come myself; then I should know if I was likely to suit. It is for your little boy, I suppose, you require a governess——"

"I? *Lieber Gott!* No, I never had any little boys. I am a wise man. I meddle not with your sex, charming as they are. No, I spend my time in writing music that is for the future, and histories that are of the follies of life."

"But," stammered the girl, "the advertisement—was that not yours?"

"Oh, yes! but certainly, that is all right: the little boy he is my friend's. He lives with us. He is too much alone, *der kleine Engel*! and he gets too old-a-fashion—what you call? We want a

lady who will teach him and companion him. You think you will do for that—yes?"

"I should like to try," said the girl earnestly. "I have never taught before, but I am fond of children."

"*Gut!*" said the old German, surveying her deliberately, "your face speaks well . . . you would be kind and patient, *nicht wahr?* He is a peculiar child . . . sensitive so to be scarcely believed, and quick, clever—oh, amazing! One thing, he is not to be taught any religion—none of the faiths and dogmas that so confound and bemuddle the brains of childhood and youth. *That* his father insists upon. For the rest, you tell him the alphabet, and reading, and to make the letters and strokes—what you call pot-hooks—you take him for walks, you tell him pretty stories, you try and make him less old-fashion, more of a child, yes . . . you would do this?"

"Certainly," said the girl; "I think my duties would be very easy. Do you—do you think his father would engage me?"

"His father gave me permission to engage who I think fit," said the old man. "He knows I have a great gift to read character. I am sure, *mein Fräulein*, you would do. I have seen one other lady, but she seem old and cross—what you call 'old-maid-gone-wrong.' I do not like her. But you I like; wait—you shall see the *kleine Engel* himself. You shall know if he likes you."

He raised his voice and called twice, "Paul—Paul!" A door opened, communicating with another room, and a little boy came in. As the girl saw him she started, and her face grew pale. "Paul," she said . . . "you! Is it possible——"

"You know him!" cried the old man in astonishment; "how comes that?"

"I know his father," cried the girl, her eyes sparkling, her whole face lighting up. "He is the child of Mr. Paul Meredith, the singer."

"*Ja!* that is so"—excitedly; "and you know him—you have heard him—is he not great? He is my pupil—my art's prize and crown. To him shall it be given to revive all that is best and purest in style and method of singing. It has suffered much, that pure, good, perfect method; but he has it—he will be great, famous. Oh, yes, I prophesy it, and I am not mistaken, never. Look," he went on excitedly, "look there—and there—and there!—all the papers—all the press—all praising, extolling him. Not that critics concern me much—I know more than any critic knows—but they lead foolish people, and it is well they have their little say. So they say it of him, and I know he will be great if he choose—all the world may say so yet; his fame is all to come, all to come, but I shall have made it. Ah, how I run on. I forget. Here, *kleiner Junge*, come forward and speak to this lady, who is so good as to say she will teach you all a young gentleman should know."

The child advanced. He looked somewhat wistfully up at the tall figure, and dark grave face.

"Are you going to teach me?" he said. "I shall not mind you. You will not be cross."

"He is a tender little soul," said the old German. "His father spoils him—they are all in all, those two. It is odd to care so much for a child . . . a little fragile bit of clay, that the merest accident would destroy. Some day I will write a history of the affections!" He leant back in his chair and looked speculatively at the two faces from under his thick grey brows. "They understand one another," he said to himself. "It is good; she will do."

"What is your name, *mein Fräulein*?" he suddenly asked.

The girl turned. "Sheba Ormatroyd," she said. He wrote it down on a piece of paper. "Age?" he asked, "or shall we leave that out; you are, if anything, almost too young. Address?—for I must communicate with you when I have seen my friend. Thank you. Salary—does that suit?"

"Yes," said Sheba, colouring. "I thought—it—it seemed to me a great deal for so little work."

"Oh," he said, laughing, "you should not ever underrate yourself. My friend thought it not enough. And when could you begin?"

"To-morrow, if you desire it," said Sheba.

"*Ja wohl*. To-morrow let it be. And the religion . . . you will remember. No prayers, no hymns, no exciting nonsense. His mind is to be left free, till he can himself make his conclusions."

"I will teach him nothing," said the girl earnestly, "that his father does not wish."

"*Gut*, then I need not longer detain you. You shall hear by letter to-morrow morning what time to come. I hope we shall be very good friends, *mein Fräulein*."

He held out his large, ink-stained hand, and the girl gave him hers frankly and cordially. She seemed to tread on air. She could scarcely believe she had really succeeded in obtaining employment so easily. What a change in her life. How it seemed to lift her above and beyond that petty, narrow-minded home-circle, every element of which was antagonistic to her. She trod the streets with swift elastic steps. The radiant air, the bright sunshine, seemed to enter into her very spirit and make her bright and radiant too. The long walk home seemed as nothing to her.

When she reached Oaklands luncheon was over, and Dolly was sitting in the verandah, stuffing herself with macaroons and sweetmeats.

"Where have you been?" she cried as Sheba appeared. "How hot you look, and how dusty your dress is. There has been a

visitor here for you. He was so disappointed you were out. I talked to him for a long time, and I told him how ill-tempered you were, and how you quarrelled with papa and boxed my ears, and were so rude to your mother that she was quite ill, and had gone to bed. He said he was very grieved to hear it."

"You certainly are a charming child," said Sheba, looking at the card Dolly held out to her. Her brow clouded as she read the name, "the Revd. Noel Hill." How unfortunate that he should have called to-day, of all days.

"He was very nice-looking," went on the irrepressible Dolly. "Too short for my taste, though; I like tall men. I kept him here a long time. He said I was very entertaining."

"No doubt," said Sheba, turning away. "If you have only dwelt enough on my iniquities, you couldn't have helped being that."

"Oh, I told him lots of other things too," said Dolly cheerfully; "all papa's business and how much money he makes, and about the Moss's, and how mean they are. It was only when he asked how I liked you, that I told him about this morning. You shouldn't have boxed my ears, and then I'd have said you were as nice as nice." But Sheba had gone.

Luncheon was still on the table, but she only cut a slice of bread and drank a glass of water. Even that seemed to her bitter and distasteful. The bread of charity, her step-father had called it, and her mother had said he was right. Well, to-night she could tell him she would be independent of that charity. She would buy her own food, and her own clothes, even if she had still to accept the shelter of his roof; £40 a year would scarcely stretch to board and lodging as well.

They had laughed at her—they had defied her—they had said she was unfit for anything but dreams and poetry, but she would show them their mistake.

Then her eyes fell on the card she held. She wondered what Noel Hill would think of her, what he would say when he heard what she had done. Somehow she felt instinctively he would not approve of it; he would tell her she had been too impetuous, that she should not set up her own will against her mother's.

"Ah, but he doesn't know what my life has been," she thought, as the tears welled one by one to the great dark eyes. "I have tried to endure, I have tried to be patient, but there is a limit. I cannot bear to be told I am a useless expense, living on charity. Even he would excuse me if he knew what Mr. Levison said to-day."

She remained quietly in her room till nearly dinner time, then she went to her mother's boudoir and knocked at the door. Mrs. Levison was going out to a dinner party, and was just arranging the dress she intended to wear.

Her face clouded as she saw Sheba.

"I hope," she said, "you have not come to make me any more scenes. I have been quite ill all day, and I don't want to be worried again."

"I have only come," said Sheba quietly, "to say I have found a situation as daily governess, and am going to enter on my duties to-morrow."

Mrs. Levison dropped the dress, and stared at her. "Are you mad?" she cried. "Do you really suppose I shall allow you to do such a thing—to disgrace me in *my* position by going out working like a drudge! Don't talk such ridiculous nonsense."

"Mother," said the girl passionately, "it is surely time you tried to understand me a little. You chose to marry this man, and you have forced me to live here under his roof for nearly two years. But when he tells me to my face that I have no claim on his courtesy as a gentleman, or his relationship as—your husband—he shows me very plainly that I must make my future independent of what he calls his charity."

"Now, Sheba," interrupted her mother, "I want no grand speeches, and no arguments. It is sufficient for me to say I won't be disgraced in the eyes of my friends and the society in which I mix. You were very rude to Mr. Levison this morning, and you had one of your usual quarrels. It is nothing new. You have made them up before, and you will make this one up also. Just tell him you were sorry you were so hasty, and he's too good-natured to think any more about it."

"Never!" said Sheba, setting her lips in firm determination. "I will never tell him that! He has insulted me too deeply."

"Insulted you—stuff and nonsense," said her mother pettishly; "one would think you were a queen to hear you talk. Now, run away, I don't want to hear any more, and it takes me quite an hour to dress."

Sheba stamped her foot impatiently on the floor. Her temper was getting the better of her again. "You care more for your dress than for your own flesh and blood!" she said, "and as for the disgrace you speak of—it is not for the way it concerns me, or yourself individually, that you mind it—but only because your friends will say: 'How can the rich Mrs. Levison let her daughter go out as a governess?'"

The truth was so true that it stung Mrs. Levison to fury. "You may do what you like," she said, "and go where you like, so only you take your hateful presence away! I am beginning to detest the very sight of you. If you want to be a governess, go and be one by all means—only you're not to stay under my roof and disgrace me! Take yourself away altogether—and when you're tired of your folly, perhaps you'll crawl back and beg for the shelter and the kindness you now scorn!"

"Hoity-toity—what's all this row about?" exclaimed a voice in the doorway. Mr. Levison was standing there, having also re-

turned early from town, to dress for the dinner-party. "Hasn't young madam got out of her tantrums yet?" he asked.

"She says she has taken a situation," cried Mrs. Levison, nearly weeping with shame and vexation. "You've driven her to it—and you know she's as obstinate as a mule—and what will people say—such a disgrace . . . and just as I was going to bring her out too!"

"Taken a situation," repeated Mr. Levison, thrusting his hands in his pockets and surveying his obdurate step-daughter with a sneer. "Well, I'm deuced glad to hear it! What sort of one—ballet-girl—shop-girl—eh?"

"Daily governess!" sobbed his wife; "only think of it! I shouldn't mind if it was 'resident'—but daily—it is shameful, wicked of you to do such a thing, Sheba."

"You told me to do it yourself, this very morning," said the girl coldly. "I only took you at your word."

"Pooh!" cried Mr. Levison, "let her go . . . let her do what she likes. Pride must have a fall, you know. She'll soon get sick of it and come back. Now take yourself off, young madam," he continued coarsely, "dinners won't wait; and the Abrahams always give jolly good spreads. I'm not going to miss this for any of your tantrums."

Sheba only looked at him as he stood there, jingling the coins in his pocket, swelling with visible self-importance as a wealthy man going to be wealthily entertained.

Then she turned to her mother. "I have told you," she said, "that I begin work to-morrow—do not forget that I *mean* it."

"Oh—do what you like," snapped Mrs. Levison, with a feverish glance at the clock which warned her of the lessening time for her toilet; "do what you like. I wash my hands of you! I'm sure you'll come to a bad end some day."

And with those words ringing in her ears as her only blessing, Sheba Ormatroyd set out on her career of independence.

CHAPTER XXVII

"WHAT AM I TO DO WITH SHEBA?"

THE first post next morning brought her a letter. She felt instinctively it was from Paul Meredith, even before she saw the signature at the end of the second page!

"DEAR MISS ORMATROYD," it began, "My friend Müller tells me, that you replied personally yesterday to our advertisement. I could scarcely credit this, knowing the position your step-father holds in Sydney, and what a wealthy man he is. Are you quite sure you are not acting upon some impulse, which you may

speedily regret? The honour of your companionship for my little boy is one I would highly appreciate, but I must ask you to consider the matter carefully. Perhaps you would prefer to talk it over with me. In that case I shall be at your service between the hours of ten and twelve to-morrow (Thursday) morning. Meanwhile, with best regards and wishes,

"Believe me,

"Yours most sincerely,

"PAUL MEREDITH."

Sheba read the letter with mingled feelings. It seemed to her cold and formal. Perhaps her new-found friend did not approve of her as a teacher. Perhaps her hopes were destined to be rudely disappointed. Her excited and feverish delight at the prospect of her new duties was suddenly checked. The old life of repression and tyranny seemed once more closing around her.

In the midst of her troubled thoughts, she heard the breakfast bell ring. She put the letter in her pocket and went slowly downstairs. Mr. Levison and Dolly were at the table. Her mother was too fatigued to appear.

Her step-father looked up as she entered. "Well, Miss Governess, I thought you were off. May I ask what sort of place this is you have taken, and where it is?"

"It is to teach a little boy—the only child of a widowed gentleman," said Sheba coldly. "I am going there from ten till four every day, and I am to have £40 a year. I propose to keep £15 a year for my clothes, and pay you the rest for my board and room here, until I can make other arrangements."

Mr. Levison fairly shouted with laughter. "Upon my word," he said, "it is the best joke I've heard for many a long day. You certainly have taken me at my word. Well, I'll give you a month of it, and if by that time you don't feel inclined to come off your stilts, and be sensible again, I'll have nothing more to do with you. I wonder what your friends the Saxtons will say when they come over. They'll be here next week. You certainly are the next best possibility to a fool, that ever wore petticoats!"

Sheba drank a cup of milk and ate a small piece of bread, then rose from the table, and without deigning a reply to Mr. Levison's observations she left the room.

A few minutes afterwards she set out for the long walk to the town. The thrill of excitement had returned. Every nerve was strung to high tension—her pulses quivered—her heart beat quick. The thought of seeing Paul Meredith, as he called himself, was uppermost in her mind. She would tell him why she had done this, and if he disapproved of her as a teacher, well, then she must try somewhere else—at a school perhaps—or advertise for herself. But she scarcely thought he would refuse her when he heard all, when he knew that she *must* get work—somewhere.

As she mounted the stairs again to the room she had been shown into on the previous day, her courage began to fail. The colour left her face, and when her timid knock brought forth the gruff, "*Herein*," from the lips of the old German, she felt ready to sink into the floor, instead of walking across it. They were all there—the child and Herr Müller, and the singer, with his beautiful face and strange sad eyes.

He sprang up as he saw her—and when she felt the clasp of his hand and saw the eager inquiry of his face, her fears vanished.

"So you have come," he said. "I am glad of that—but how is this, Miss Ormatroyd—what has happened since we walked in the park together two mornings back? I looked upon you as a rich, fashionable young lady—and now I hear——"

"Yes, it is quite true," said Sheba. "My step-father and I have quarrelled, and I have resolved to earn my own living. When I applied for the situation I saw advertised, I of course had not the slightest idea to whom I was applying—but if you think I should suit——"

A slightly humorous smile touched the singer's lips.

"Suit—nay, it is too much honour—you are a great deal too clever, if anything, to teach babies, but I am engaged so much, and my little Paul——"

The child came forward as he heard his name. "I like her, my father," he said quietly; "let her stay."

"There, you see!" laughed Meredith, "your fate is decided. You will find him very old-fashioned. It is Müller's fault. He has made him half a German."

"It is so," nodded the old man "and quite right, *nicht wahr*? It was as easy to learn two languages as one. There, let the *Fräulein* take a seat, and we will tell her about ourselves. We are queer folk and she must take us as she finds us."

Sheba laughed and took the offered chair. Her shyness had vanished. She felt quite at her ease now, even with this tall and stately man, with his grave handsome face and courtly manners, who was still to her a being apart from ordinary manhood.

"And so," said the old German after awhile, when he had rambled on about music and books, and their Bohemian life, and Paul's magnificent voice till he was tired, "and so, *mein Fräulein*, you have not a happy home. That is sad, for you are so young. But take heart, things may be better. It is a grand thing, 'hope.' I say so always to Paul when he is what you call down-in-the-mouth. '*Mein Freund*,' I say, 'hope—do not let it go—there is always the chance of things to get better; so hope.'"

Sheba smiled somewhat sadly. "I am afraid," she said, "there is not much chance of things getting better with me, but if I can only work and make my own living, I shall be content."

"What did your step-father say when you told him your intention?" asked the singer, looking at her gravely.

"He did not believe me, I think," said the girl colouring shyly, "and this morning he said he would give me a month, and he was sure at the end of it I should be glad to throw up my duties. You see," she added with unconscious pathos, "he knows nothing of my nature at all. He does not understand that if I begin a thing, I must carry it out."

"I am afraid," said Paul Meredith gently, "that you have had rather a hard life. Why did your mother not interfere?"

"She thinks I am very ungrateful," said Sheba, "not to be content with food, and clothes, and shelter. Perhaps I am . . . only it is the way a thing is given that makes one grateful—or the reverse . . . and Mr. Levison has always made me feel I have no right to anything in his house."

"Well," said the singer thoughtfully, "it is strange that fate should direct you here. But as Müller says, we will be good to you, Bohemians as we are, and I hope your pupil will not prove troublesome. He is obedient to me always, but then he has the weakness to be very fond of me; childhood is an irrational thing, you know."

"It is a surprising weakness—very," said Franz Müller dryly, "and you do not share or encourage it—no; *you* are not irrational?"

"In this instance I fear I am," he said with a smile at Sheba. "The child is the dearest thing in life to me, and I can give no reason except that—it is so."

"Isn't that the only reason love ever allows us?" said Sheba, lifting her great sad eyes to his face. "I never heard of any other. I don't see that any other is needed."

"Perhaps you are right," he said abruptly; "I won't go deeper into the matter at present. I have to run away now, but I must say I am glad you are to cast your lot in with us. I am sure we shall be friends. We are both unhappy—we have both a grudge against fate. Who knows—we may do each other good!"

"Just what I expressed to the *Fräulein* yesterday," interrupted Müller. "She will find us always the same. We like her, and we shall I hope be friends."

The tears rose to Sheba's eyes. "I hope so," she said earnestly. "I have so few friends."

So the compact was sealed and she entered upon her new duties.

* * * * *

The week that followed this interview was a very hard and stormy one for Sheba. Hex was furious when he heard what she had done—her mother scarcely spoke to her, and her step-father sneered and scoffed at her, at every available opportunity.

Sheba's impulsive action had annoyed him excessively—it made him look mean and tyrannical—and he was afraid his friends would think him so. The girl's firmness, her quiet *hauteur* and indifference to his remarks angered him still further, and by degrees

his dislike to her became a settled animosity, and he delighted in prophesying all sorts of evil and misfortune for her future, as natural results of such an obstinate and headstrong temper.

Noel Hill called again, and not succeeding in seeing the girl, he wrote to her and begged her to tell him her reasons for this strange step on her part. Sheba did so and also wrote in a similar manner to Aunt Allison, who she felt sure would understand her better than any one else.

In this she was right, for Miss Saxton saw clearly that the proud independent spirit of the girl could not but revolt against the constant humiliation of her position. She had, in fact, scarcely expected her to bear it as long as she had done. She wrote to her at great length—neither approving nor blaming, but giving her much judicious counsel, and saying the letter would be speedily followed by a visit as they were all going to Queensland and would stop at Sydney for a week or two on their way.

So Sheba went steadily to and fro, and felt so happy and so busy that she paid little heed to the growing discomforts of her home life. Her new friends charmed her more and more. The courtesy and chivalry of the one, the quaint humour and the vast amount of erudition possessed by the other, the docility and intelligence of her little pupil, were all novel and delightful experiences.

She did not see Paul Meredith very often, but the old German was constantly in the room when she gave her lessons and even sometimes accompanied them on their walks.

On one of these occasions her mother passed them in the carriage, and turned away in shuddering horror from the sight of that queer-looking figure. She had heard from Mr. Levison that Sheba's employer was a widower, with a little boy, and naturally put this Bohemian-looking personage with his long hair and wide, slouched hat, down as that individual.

"Well, she has made a queer choice, I must say," she thought. "I expect she will soon get tired of it."

But little as she understood this troublesome daughter of hers, she knew that her resolves were apt to be very resolute indeed, and she felt somewhat uncomfortable as she thought of those two past years, and how little she had interested herself in anything that Sheba did, or cared for.

She leant back in her luxurious carriage, but somehow the cushions were not so soft, or the springs so easy as usual.

"I wish," she said suddenly to herself, "that I could get her married. What a comfort it would be!"

She ran over in her mind's eye all the eligible bachelors she knew, wishing they did not comprehend quite so many Cohens, and Moss's, and Leveys. Sheba would never look at a Jew she was afraid; even if he had forsworn Synagogue, and "kosher meat." Then of Christians there were so few well off, with the exception of one or two descendants of convict families, who, as far as money

went, were people of the greatest importance, and regulated legislature and worked zealously for the country, to which they owed their wealth.

But Sheba had no dower, and, in her mother's eyes, no beauty, and was hardly likely to commend herself to the eyes of such magnates as these.

"She is not the style to suit any of them," thought Mrs. Levison in despair. "With her dowdy dresses, and her great eyes, and her coldness and self-confidence."

It was rather an odd summing-up of Sheba's mental and physical attractions, but no doubt it was correct, at least her mother thought so.

"I think," she said, "I will go and see Miss Saxton. Perhaps she can advise me."

So she pulled the check-string, and had herself driven to the hotel where the Saxtons were staying, and, finding Aunt Allison at home, she straightway poured out to her all her grievances and difficulties respecting Sheba.

Miss Saxton listened, half pained, half amused.

"Really," she said at last, "I do not see why you should object so much to the girl's desire for independence. Your husband is to blame, if any one, for telling her she was a dependant on his charity. No girl of spirit would like that. And what does it matter about her teaching if none of your fashionable friends know it? Some of them are not even aware that you have a daughter."

Mrs. Levison coloured beneath the pistachio-nut powder, which of late had to be applied more lavishly than of yore, to hide the ravages of time, which she called—worry.

"Sheba would never go anywhere with me," she said sulkily. "And she hated driving so I was obliged to take Dolly." Then, after a short pause, she burst out petulantly: "I wish to goodness I could marry her to some one."

Miss Saxton started. "Marry her," she repeated. "She is far too young—and then she would not be easy to please. If she loves, it will be no light matter."

"Loves!" broke in Mrs. Levison with a slighting laugh. "My dear Miss Saxton, do not let us talk of such an everyday matter as marriage, as though we were two schoolgirls. Love! Why, in a year what does it signify if you were in love with your husband? I have been married twice, and I can thankfully lay my hand on my heart, and say that neither sentiment nor romance spoilt either of the marriages, or led me to expect more of men than common-sense shows us they possess."

"You are fortunate," said Aunt Allison dryly. "Some women are not so—sensible. I think, too, it is only natural for a young girl to look upon love as the prelude to wedded life. Otherwise it is such a cold, sordid, give-and-take business."

Mrs. Levison began dimly to perceive that she had come to the wrong person for sympathy. Her brow clouded, she answered with some asperity, "For goodness' sake don't encourage Sheba in any of these ideas, she is quite bad enough already."

"I think," said Miss Saxton with quiet dignity, "that you need not be afraid of my encouraging your daughter in anything to which you object. Indeed, I scarcely see her now. She is engaged at her duties almost all day."

"Duties," sneered Mrs. Levison; "fine duties! Duty begins at home, so I was always taught, and there she goes day after day dancing attendance on a little idiotic child and his old father, who looks more like the Wandering Jew than anything else—wasting her time and pretending it is a fine thing to be independent. Bah! I have no patience with her."

"And perhaps," said Miss Saxton gently, "that is just what she wants—patience. If you had studied her character——"

"Studied her character, indeed," interrupted Mrs. Levison stormily. "Upon my word, I shall begin to think the world is turning topsy-turvy. Where are parents told to *study* their children's character, I should like to know? My Bible tells me, 'Children obey your parents in all things.' I always obeyed mine, and I expect my children to do the same."

"Alas!" thought Miss Saxton, "that poor misquoted Book! Why is it so painfully easy to drag out a text from its place and context, and fit it into the groove of our own petty, paltry desires?"

But seeing that Mrs. Levison was really very much perturbed she only said it would, of course, be very much easier for parents if they could always secure the obedience they exacted. Still, children had a way of growing up, and displaying qualities and characters of their own, and under some circumstances it was as well to be a little—judicious.

So, partly mollified and partly irate, Mrs. Levison drove back to Oaklands, with that riddle still unsolved, "What on earth am I to do with Sheba?"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A NEW THEORY.

MEANWHILE Sheba herself found her duties sit very lightly on her shoulders. Her little pupil was docile and very intelligent, and it was really a pleasure to teach him. Then the old German had taken a great liking to her, and being a man of culture and great learning, as well as of strange experiences, his society had for her an untiring charm. Of Paul Meredith she saw very little, though sometimes she heard the beautiful rich voice working away

at some new score, or difficult exercise. He rarely, however, approached her at lesson time, and she appreciated the delicacy which kept him from anything like supervision, or interference, with her mode of management and instruction.

At first she had been puzzled by the old German's intimation that nothing in the shape of religious teaching was to be administered, but before many days she found the key to the puzzle. Neither Franz Müller nor his friend and pupil believed in the Christian religion as she had known and learnt it. Little by little, by hints and suggestions, and queer sharp queries, did the old German convey this to her mind, and after the first shock was over Sheba found herself eagerly and thirstily questioning him on many points and subjects which had hitherto been as a sealed book, or a subject to be received, not questioned.

Mrs. Levison had had one invariable answer to Sheba's inquiries from the time that the child had been able to put any at all—"My Bible says so." She always spoke of the Bible as a sort of personal possession of her own, and had a superficial knowledge of sundry texts and chapters that served her for the groundwork of belief, and the assurance of her own future safety in the world to come.

When Sheba had timidly maintained that actions must surely plead for something, she had always been told that the best actions and the purest deeds of self-denial were only in the sight of God as "filthy rags;" this sweeping denunciation had somewhat disheartened her—so much so that she observed in her usual downright fashion that she could see no use in trying to be good, if God declared it to be bad! He could but call sin—that. Yet Mrs. Levison had always upheld her own virtues *as* virtues, and never failed to declare that she thanked Heaven she was a Christian, and had been born of Christian parents.

One afternoon when the lessons were over, a sudden storm came on, and Sheba and her young charge were unable to go for their usual walk.

The little fellow was amusing himself with making notes on some of Herr Müller's MSS. paper, and the old man was leaning back in his easy-chair smoking a huge pipe, and watching the pouring rain. Sheba advanced to the window. "It looks very hopeless," she said. "I must wait till it is over, I suppose?"

He nodded. "Sit down and we will have a talk," he said.

Sheba obeyed, nothing loth, for she dearly loved hearing the old man argue, philosophize and dispute in his quaint, dogmatic fashion.

She took a chair opposite his own. "Are you still angry," she asked, "with what I said yesterday?"

"You mean," he said, "that inspiration and miracles don't admit of argument, but must be received in faith. No. I am not angry. One is not angry with a child because its mind

cannot follow a certain line of thought, and if it were not for the faith instilled in childhood, there would be an end to the blind belief in religion and the acceptance of the Bible as its basis. You, for instance, take its inspiration for granted just as you accept the authenticity of miracles that set at naught nature and every law of nature, and *that* for no good or satisfactory reason."

"The reason," said Sheba timidly, "is generally given. The prayer, or the desire for help in distressful circumstances."

"Bah!" he said contemptuously. "The desire of one feeble mortal in our small spot of the universe is, then, to work a revolution in all the laws of nature! Let man examine those laws before claiming any merit in blind faith. Traditional belief is not knowledge, and it is most often the ignorant and superstitious man who claims to know the Bible most thoroughly."

"I know," said the girl sadly, "there are many improbabilities, but if one began to argue them out, one would end in believing nothing."

"So much the better," he said grimly, "for the education of the after-life."

Her eyes flashed, her face grew eager. "Oh," she cried, "is *that* possible? I have so often wondered . . . it seems we *must* have so much more to learn."

"*Natürlich*," and he laughed. "To think that this brief poor little earth-life is *all* . . . and that all eternity bears the fruit of its misdoings! What fools ever propagated such a doctrine, and what greater fools have believed it! Does science accept any statement without proof? Is not every law of nature clearly printed as cause and effect. Yet in all the more important facts relative to the after-life, we are asked to rest content with nursery fables instilled into our baby minds at our mother's knee! We are forbidden to question *one* word in a host of improbable records in *one* Book in a world of books. . . . To limit inquiry is to stultify all mental and spiritual growth. But *here* it is limited in order to bind men's souls to submission, or content them with the construction put upon it by a parcel of priests, who know perfectly well that all its early spiritual history has been handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation—that it is far more *man's* word, than *God's*." He paused, puffing a huge cloud of smoke from between his lips, as he watched that troubled girl's face.

"There are problems of life and mind," he went on, "which demand deep, patient research, and yet these are the very problems that are the least considered. They are carelessly dismissed, or studiously evaded. Tell me, now, you have a mother; she taught you to say prayers, to go to church; to learn certain creeds and collects. Did you ever go to her, and say, 'Explain this,' or 'Tell me why I must believe that?' Could she explain? No, of course not. We none of us can. Now my father—will you wonder when I

tell you—he was a priest of Rome. He left the Church, he could not bear its hypocrisy, its slavery, its blind submission to an ecclesiastical rule, which from the Seven Hills stretches a spiritual sceptre over half the world. Having left it, he was persecuted with a bitterness and animosity worthy of fiends! That was what I first learnt of religion. From that time I began to seek and to find for myself. My father was a clever man. He wrote very clever books; he made powerful friends. I was sent to one of our great universities, and if I had possessed any great faith in God, or Christ, or the Church, I should have lost it there. It was our pride to say we had proved everything, and believed nothing, but gradually as the hot fires of youth burned themselves out, I grew calmer and more philosophical. I could separate grain from chaff, fable from fact, superstition from reality."

"And now?" questioned Sheba eagerly, as he paused again.

"Now," he shrugged his shoulders, "I believe in art," he said with a grim smile. "More I dare not say, for fear it would shock you."

"Oh, please tell me more," cried the girl eagerly. "I have never found any one to whom I could talk on these subjects. The clergyman who used to teach me was so good, he saw everything reflected as it were in the light of Heaven, but I—I never could—and I am so restless, so unhappy, so terribly perplexed."

"Are you?" said the old man, looking at the great eager eyes—the flushed face. "Well, *mein Fraulein*, I fear I shall not make you any happier if I tell you what I believe or question. Let it rest. Keep your own simple faith, and be content, if you can."

"But—I cannot."

"You must then be prepared to sacrifice many pet notions," he said, still regarding her with that speculative glance. "Progress in thought, as in everything else, means mental friction, and that raises clouds of dust between what has been, and what is to be, till sometimes men are choked and blinded, and ready to forswear further trouble because the result is not agreeable. Now we will suppose that your mind is swept and garnished, a clean, comfortable little chamber of childish simplicity. Then here come I like a great, rough, broom. Prepare for the dust."

"Well?" she said, half laughing, but wholly eager.

"Well," he answered, "I am not going to tell you there is no God, that the world grew out of nothing, and yet in seven days stood complete as it stands now, because, what matters seven days, or seventy years, or seven million years, when the Creative Power has once been granted. The command '*Be*' was sufficient. The speculations as to actual time concern us far less than the Power that first produced order out of chaos, and organized a system of nature so perfect that the original laws have never needed change, but stand fixed and sure for all time: day and night,

summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, all in their way necessary, and all in their way incapable of improvement. Against the great First Cause—Divine, if you will, nothing can be said. But let us come to man, and see from your point of view what he has done to further the wishes of his Creator, or abide by the laws of existence. Very early we come to sin. Naturally we ask, how could One to whom sin was unknown, create a being in His own image with this capacity all ready grafted in his nature?"

"I have often wondered about that," said Sheba, as the old man paused to blow out another cloud of smoke; "or why God should have created man at all, unless it was as an experiment."

"If so, it was an experiment which has provided Him with a somewhat troublesome Frankenstein," murmured the old German musingly. "Well, let us say it was an experiment. It did not answer you see. He went from bad to worse. He began to develop with alarming rapidity all those sins and failings which we see to this day. Disobedience, deceit, treachery, pride, self-sufficiency, envy, hatred, lying, blood-guiltiness, truly a goodly crop! Yet, doubtless, he was intended for a special place in nature, and to fill that place perfectly. We are told he has never done so, and that has given rise to an idea that he has a future state awaiting him, where he will be able to perfect all that is incomplete here. But why limit him to one future state? Why should he not be a creature of many?"

As he looked straight at Sheba while asking the question, she felt he expected an answer, but the only response of which she was capable was to echo his own words.

"Of—many?" she said in a bewildered manner.

"But certainly, *mein Fraulein*, of many worlds, of many conditions. You cannot grasp the idea? Ah, but I see in the future the dawn of a new science which shall set aside the world's old prejudices. Men are not yet ripe for it . . . but it will come . . . trust me it will come. It will sweep away the irrational follies that have clouded the sky of progress . . . man will recognize his own powers, and live for his own ennoblement; live, not for his three or fourscore years of human life, but for that future which now he dreads: that future which Priesthood has determined for him as a limitless period of damnation, or bliss, according to the mode in which those brief, blundering, helpless years on the earth plane have been spent. How rational! How comforting a creed, is it not?"

"Then what," faltered Sheba in bewilderment, "is your idea of man and his future state?"

He laughed, a short gruff laugh, as he blew his clouds of smoke upward to the ceiling.

"In nature," he said, "nothing is stationary; all is progressive. The life and powers of this planet, which to us seem all and

everything, are linked with the life and evolution of other planets more than we wot of. How shall I explain? Life is perpetual motion. Nothing is *still*. The blood in the human frame, the blossoms of the tree, the plants, the air, the sea, the chain of planets, the stars, all have this rotatory impulse, all revolve and circulate, round and round and round unceasingly, reaching an end that is but a new beginning. Shall man alone have his one little day, and his long rest? No, far otherwise. He too goes on and on and on, further than the mind can stretch, higher than human thought can reach. Let not the gross and evil-minded think that with the end of earth life, comes for him a pure and perfect change. To the drunkard, the debauchee, the thief, the murderer, the hypocrite, there still remains the spirit that he nourished and cherished to the exclusion of higher and nobler endeavours. He carries it with him, he hears still its devilish promptings, he sees his vice reflected as in a mirror. The work, the real labour then begins. Little by little, stage by stage, he can raise himself higher in the scale, or, still impeded and weighed down by the grosser passions, revolve in even a lower sphere than the planet he has left."

"That," said Sheba thoughtfully, "sounds very terrible."

"It is just," said the old man sternly, "though it is not theology—the theology that speaks of one creed for the salvation of all humanity, and of a few thousand years as the sole record of our earth-world."

"Can it be traced back so far then?" inquired Sheba.

"Far?" he said thoughtfully. "If I were to speak to you of millions of millions of years, your brain would get perplexed. Yet there is a race about whom the civilized West knows little and cares less, who have traced back the earth history to a period modern knowledge has never reached—a race who were in existence when there was no such thing as the Continent of Europe. . . . Ah! if you but knew my language, what wonders it to you would unfold. I come of a people who think, think—always they think. What I have there (he waved his hand in the direction of his bookshelves) will only be known perhaps twenty, or thirty years hence, to English philosophers through the medium of translation. To me they have long been friends. They have taught me to honour life, and to have no fear of death. But why? Not because I—poor, sinning, erring mortal—can throw off all my soul's responsibility and believe it possible to find happiness in a future condition of utter quiescence, varied by harping on harps and adoring some vague glory—no; but because with death opens out a new life . . . for all life is death, and all death is life in another form. Nothing really *dies*; it but changes its condition . . . decay breeds life anew in the dead substance and gives it a different existence . . . Is man alone to have but one? All religions teach it because they are rooted in past

ignorance and superstition . . . but science and thought teach it not. Again and again, and yet again shall man live—for that which *is* man knows no death . . . the essence of immortality is with him and through the changing cycles of years he sweeps along his course—his *final* destiny who shall declare? No priesthood can solve that riddle, even though it professes to do so by Biblical record. Happily, I see a future when we shall read these records by the interpretation of science—not of priests."

"You are very bitter," she said, "against priests."

"Have I not good reason? I know every detail of my father's life. I know from his own lips what are the dogmas of that most comfortless faith. It had its root in ignorance and superstition, and through every sign of progress and advancement, it still tried to hold *that* root as its basis and one of its surest weapons. To prove this, look for yourself into the history of any purely Catholic country, say, Italy, Spain, France, or Ireland—what will you see? The iron heel of oppression and tyranny engendering poverty, distress and mental blindness. Can any power be so tyrannous or so overmastering as a power that decrees to itself command over a man's soul, not only for this life but for the hereafter! There you have the keynote to the great breadth and magnitude of Popish possessions in the old dark ages. . . . When a man owned millions, and lay on his death-bed, and a priest whispered in his ear: 'Your millions to the Church, or your soul to everlasting damnation!'—I suppose he did not hesitate very long. By the time he found out that no other human being had the slightest power or control over his spiritual welfare, it was probably too late to alter his will and testament, so his relations cursed him, and the Church fattened and waxed more and more audacious every day. The best part of man's mental outfit is judgment, and freedom of thought. The moment he puts his neck under the yoke of any special creed, faith, or dogma of *man*, he sacrifices his best possession. . . . Let him search for himself, think for himself, seek out Truth without help or hindrance from old-world prejudices, and stale traditions."

"But suppose men are weak and ignorant, and have neither time nor ability to make such a search?" suggested Sheba diffidently.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"For the weak and ignorant," he said, "they must bear their burden as best they can—priests won't lighten it, be very sure; as for the other class," he smiled somewhat grimly, "they will have time enough"—he went on, as he laid down his great pipe, which was finished at last: "Do you forget what I told you, that life is by no means the brief thing of threescore years and ten, most men believe it to be?"

"But this—doctrine, shall I call it?—is as much in want of proof as the old one that you demolish."

He looked at her gravely.

"Yes," he said, "you are right; but you must remember that to me it has been the subject of long years of study and investigation. I examine it, not as it stands *alone*, but as an integral part of a whole system—a system so wonderful, so complicated, yet withal so perfect, that its study is also its reward. What does man know of man? He is a bundle of senses and appetites, foolish desires and vain ambitions; granted—but is there not also *something*—one small principle, let us call it—that represents in him the Divine nature and alone separates him from the animal? This is the reasoning faculty, the human soul, a link between Creator and created which impels and *teaches* higher progress, until the strength of the highest attraction draws it finally into its original condition. So is free will granted that the choice between good and evil may be *conscious*, and every victory obtained by the higher over the lower nature an additional source of strength for ensuing conflicts. The soul is the battlefield. Here the warfare of passion, desire, vanity, selfishness and pride takes place, and here takes place also that separation which, as yet, you could not comprehend if I explained, but whose nature is to withdraw a permanent and eternal personality from a transient shape that it inhabits for the purpose of discipline. Death is thus no terror, only a mere physical ill brought about by physical requirements."

"That is very philosophical to hear," said Sheba. "But I am too great a coward to look upon death so calmly. . . . Indeed, the fact of having many instead of *one*, is not more comforting than the accepted Christian doctrine of judgment, and its penalties or rewards."

"Phooh!" said the old man contemptuously. "How you talk like a child who has well learnt its alphabet of religion. Death—it is simply the parting with a sheath that is rusty and cumbersome. Man himself, or that which constitutes him, escapes gladly enough. . . . The essence of his personality is with him—the best part—the only part, so to speak, that was the *man*."

"Yet you say *that* is born again and again, with no consciousness of former conditions. It is like the doctrine of Pythagoras."

"Not quite," he said with his odd smile. "The science of which I speak, and whose doctrines are still like mysteries unrevealed to the European world, deals with an entity during a long series of existences, all of them rational and none of them proving that, however its first principle was evolved, whether from the ape he resembles, or the Spirit who decreed 'Be,' he never returns again to a purely animal condition. Evolution is ceaseless in its work; it is a process still going on with man as with everything that means development of what *has* been into a perfection that *may* be. If bygone races could look on us to-day with a perfect remembrance of what they were in their day, they might be as

filled with astonishment as we ourselves, if we returned some thousand years hence to look on our successors."

There was a long, thoughtful pause. It was altogether such a novel doctrine to Sheba, that her mind could scarcely grasp it. It was familiar enough to Franz Müller, who had studied a great deal of Eastern literature, and was almost as familiar with it as with the works of Strauss, Goethe, Hegel and Schopenhauer. Whether these studies and researches had been of actual benefit, it is not easy to determine. He was right when he said he believed in very little, though he could theorize and philosophize on almost every subject.

He certainly was not a safe, though a deeply interesting teacher, for any one of Sheba's temperament, but there was no one to tell her so, and no one to care or question as to what that eager, thirsting soul of hers was receiving. Mrs. Levison, having grounded her children in the usual forms, creeds and doctrines of nineteenth century Christianity, never troubled herself further about their spiritual condition. As long as they went regularly to church, and she saw the Bible on their dressing-tables, she felt quite satisfied. She was fond of quoting "Train up a child in the way he should go." Of course, if that child did not complete the proverb for himself, or herself, she was not to blame.

Sheba remembered that text as she went home through the glistening wet streets after listening to Müller's dissertation . . . but remembered it only to feel what a wide difference lay between it, and her present intentions of carrying it out.

(To be continued.)

ON THE SILVER PITTS;

OR,

THE WORK OF THE MISSION TO DEEP SEA FISHERMEN.

By ALEXANDER GORDON.

THERE are many bright and beautiful records in the varied history of philanthropic enterprise, and it is always an invidious task to compare any particular branch of such efforts with others of a kindred character; but the discriminating test of success ought always to be sought, and will invariably be found, not in perfection of organization, in elaboration of detail, or in amplitude of income, but in the attainment of the actual objects which were primarily contemplated in the undertaking. It may further be said that a work which commends itself to men of all classes and of all creeds; which does not seek to promulgate any set of *doctrinaire* opinions; which has, in all its distinctive developments, a broad and liberal outlook; which, in its zeal for the moral and spiritual welfare of the masses, does not forget or ignore their physical necessities; a work which commends itself alike to Christian and to sceptic, caring for the body as well as the soul, is, to say the least, worthy of serious consideration by all who have an ear for that still sad music of humanity of which Wordsworth speaks, and who seek to care for and to alleviate the sufferings of their fellowmen.

But even as an indispensable preliminary to the inquiry whether a particular benevolent undertaking has fulfilled the purposes for which it was originated, it is of prime consequence to ascertain with some exactitude the nature of the circumstances which necessitated the initiation of such a work. If, for example, the case in point be that of a community, or a race, sunk in the depths of barbarian savagery, there would be recognized in the minds of all save the merest handful of persons who believe, with Rousseau, that there is something nobly original and pure in the character and intellect of primitive man, an adequate *primâ facie* reason for the introduction of the enlightenment and the resources of civilization. As to whether it is the one thing needful to preach and teach to certain heathen and Mussulman populations the abstract and somewhat metaphysical doctrines of an elaborated Christian system, is, of course, subject to controversy. Canon Isaac Taylor might perchance declare that this is not advisable, but however strong one's personal feeling on the subject may be, it

is happily unnecessary here to express any opinion whatsoever. That which alone is of concern in the present case, is to demonstrate the necessity of the admirable, Christian, philanthropic, and in the best sense, socialistic work, which has been undertaken during the past seven or eight years amongst the erewhile neglected, and even now comparatively unknown, floating populations of the North Sea.

Let it be said at once, however, to what portion of the boisterous German Ocean reference is now more particularly made. It is known to most that that wind-swept strip of water is the scene of much shipwreck, storm, and death, from year's end to year's end. But it is known to comparatively few at the present hour (and ten years ago it was hardly known to any outside a limited circle) what is the distinctive character of these North Sea communities; what is the exact nature of their work, and the terrible concomitants of the lot which is their portion for many weeks of the year on that treacherous, deadly sea. Perhaps the best way to communicate a vivid, but withal accurate and trustworthy knowledge of the peculiar habits, character, and needs of the North Sea smacksmen a few years ago, and conjointly to demonstrate the necessity of the humane work which has since been commenced and successfully maintained amongst them, will be to take the reader in imagination for a trial trip to one of the Deep Sea trawling fleets; to a fleet such as the fleets were ten or twelve years ago. It shall be supposed that the fleet in question is one of those sailing from Yarmouth, and that it is cruising on a certain strip of sea, nearly 220 miles from land, known as the "Silver Pits."

The voyage to this spot shall be made by steamer from London. Lying off Billingsgate Fish Market in the Thames, a cutter of 120 tons burden may be seen preparing to steam down the river to Gravesend, on her way to the Deep Sea Fisheries. She has just unloaded a vast quantity of fish-boxes stocked with sole, plaice, whiting, turbot, cod, haddocks, and similar kinds of fish, and now she is ready for another journey to the trawling grounds, with a huge cargo of empty trunks for delivery to the great fleet of fishing smacks far away at sea. Proceeding on board this by no means enchanting vessel, the landsman passenger will find a cheery welcome, and very soon he will be journeying through the miscellaneous multitude of river shipping on his way to the mouth of the Thames. Meanwhile he will have an opportunity of inspecting the fish cutter by which he travels. We shall mercifully suppose that "the winter is past, the rain is over and gone," and that the summer sun is shining in an unclouded sky of brightest blue. The deck of the little vessel (and the bridge more especially) will be regarded as a peculiar coign of vantage. Down below in the cabin, a somewhat cheerless compartment, the atmosphere will be found peculiarly hot and stifling, but yonder, on the

upper deck, the winds of heaven have free play, and, when the coaling hulk at Barking or Gravesend has been safely passed, and the ship skips merrily over the blue waves of the open sea, the gale, permeated with invigorating ozone, becomes additionally inspiring, and if, perchance, the fare which is offered to the inexperienced passenger is none of the finest or the most wholesome, yet, if the wretched trouble of sea-sickness is fairly surmounted, the entire change of scene from dingy London to that beautiful and ever-mysterious ocean will amply repay the traveller for the many discomforts and annoyances which are an inevitable part of the voyage to the Silver Pits or the dreary Dogger, even in the mirthful months of June or July. By-and-by the night will set in; the clear bright stars will come out; the summer moon will shine on the smooth unruffled waters; and after the visitor has indulged his evening reverie (if he be contemplative) to the full, repose will at length be sought in the ship's cabin below. Not in a downy bed, however, or, indeed, in a bed of any sort. The most comfortable, and, from the sanitary point of view, the *safest* place of rest, may be found on one of the lockers which surround the cabin. If in the night a smart breeze should arise, the waves begin to heave, and the little steamer to pitch and roll in the trough of the sea, the hours of sleep will probably not pass without a tiny series of adventures. To find oneself suddenly precipitated on the floor of the cabin, when the mind is filled with radiant dreams of the Elysian fields, is hardly conducive either to mental or physical serenity! In such circumstances, if the traveller be a lover of the delightful verse and prose of that fascinating *litterateur* and glorifier of the nomad life, Mr. R. L. Stevenson, he will probably think with envy of the cosy spot under the open heaven upon *terra firma*, of which mention is made in the "Travels with a Donkey"—

"The bed was made, the room was fit,
By punctual eve the stars were lit;
The air was still, the water ran,
No need was there for maid or man,
When we put up, my ass and I,
At God's green caravanserai."

The dawn will, however, disperse the troubles of the night, and the glory of a sunrise at sea more than recompense the petty troubles which have been experienced. The day may not pass by unclouded; on the contrary, the remainder of the passage will probably be made "through bursts of sunshine and through flying showers;" but ere the darkness again falls upon the sea the eye will be gladdened by one of the most delightful pictures which can possibly be witnessed on any part of the ocean. The Silver Pits will be reached, and the vessel will steam into the midst of a great trawling fleet of perhaps 100 sail, the dark weather-beaten canvas of the smacks glittering with dazzling brilliancy in that

golden sunset under the glow of which the western wave is all aflame.

The landsman visitor will now leave the fish-cutter (it is ten years ago, remember!) and proceed in the ship's boat to the fishing-smack for which he is bound. On arriving there he will be received with a rough and boisterous welcome, and then his first real experience and knowledge of the conditions of a trawler's life will begin. The smacksmen themselves may probably occupy his attention at the outset. He will in all likelihood recognize them as the most uncouth, unkempt, and uncultured set of human beings it has ever been his lot to come in contact with. These men, dressed in the roughest and queerest garb, strangers to any ablution for several weeks, save that to which the sweeping tempest or the whirling wave has subjected them; their minds an utter blank to all that is of interest in the great life of the world outside their own little community and the mystery of their craft; the language of not a few of them garnished with the foulest expletives and pregnant with the silliest and dirtiest allusions; their cabin below deck, which is at once kitchen, scullery, parlour, smoking-room, club-room, and bedroom combined—the scene, moreover, of unimaginable filth; the terrible sacrifice in suffering which they endure as a part of the price paid by them for the fish that they obtain; the chill of the damp night while the smacksmen paces the deck, cheered alone by the whistle of the wind and the rattling of the rain; the long spell of weary toil in the grey dawn of the scowling morn, cold and cheerless as a winter's day ashore, though it is the summer month of June; the toil of all hands in hauling up the trawl-net, perchance to find but a few fishes which will only sell as "offal" inclosed within it, interspersed with seaweed, shells, worthless but strange curiosities, and, it may be, a grinning skeleton to boot!—these men and their surroundings alike will deeply touch the heart of the stranger, and their intellectual, physical, moral, spiritual, and sanitary needs will begin to be realized with proportionate intensity and force. When the tempest is over and the sea again is calm, the word may go round from Tom to Dick and from Dick to Bill, "I say, old man, the 'coper's' jest a-sailed into the fleet," and upon inquiry, the visitor is shown a vessel flying the Dutch or Belgian flag. By-and-by he will be taken in the smack's boat, with sundry of the crew, to this craft, which has been well called "the pirate of the North Sea." He there discovers that an ostensible trade is carried on with the fishermen in certain articles of clothing and cheap duty-free tobacco, but ere long he becomes convinced that the real—because by far the most profitable—vendible commodities consist of vile, fiery, polluted brandies and gins, together with the most loathsome prints and kindred indescribable articles, brought from the continental seaport from which the vessel sails. On the deck of the copper he

will be introduced to a miscellaneous company of drunken, degraded trawlers; men who, in contact with their worst enemy in the guise of their one and only friend, have been reduced to a level lower than that of the savage barbarian. There an opportunity is found for the display of the fiercest and most malignant passions, and the pages which should tell in bald, naked outline the unvarnished tale of a year's record of events that followed drunken bouts on the coper would be a veritable chapter of horrors! The landsman visitor will return to London invigorated by his contact with the free winds of heaven, cheered by his communion with the mysterious Power which is shadowed forth in all Nature, and whose presence and potency seem doubly real on the far-away sea, but conscious of a bitter pang as he reflects upon the outcast, suffering, and altogether miserable condition of these sons of toil and of sorrow on the rough bosom of the German Ocean.

All this was ten or twelve years ago. In August, 1881, a London gentleman went out to the Short Blue fleet, not then cruising on the Silver Pits, but on a neighbouring fishing-ground, known as the Dogger Bank. He saw all that has been already described and a great deal more, and he came back firmly impressed, in the first place, with the idea that SOMETHING should be done by the benevolent British public for these men; secondly, that this something must be as well for the body as the soul; and thirdly that the *modus operandi* would be most suitably found in a vessel fitted to cruise with the fishing fleet as the coper cruised, and which might be used in every way as an anti-coper, for the moral, social and spiritual elevation and regeneration of the forlorn smacksmen. The difficulties in the way were, however, many and great; but, in the result, they were all happily surmounted, and in the month of July, 1882, the first mission smack, the "Ensign" (since re-christened the "Thomas Gray," as a mark of respect to Mr. Thomas Gray, C.B., of the Board of Trade, one of the oldest friends of the enterprise) sailed from Yarmouth to join the Short Blue fleet. That there was a clear necessity for such a step will be readily admitted, as, indeed, it has never been questioned.

The primary objects of the work have already been hinted at. It will now be necessary to describe them somewhat more minutely, and to show that the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen (the institution planned by Mr. E. J. Mather in 1881, and actually founded by him in 1882) has succeeded, and succeeded in the most marvellous manner and degree, in attaining these objects. The mission ship, then, was an anti-coper, and, as such, one of her first duties was to checkmate the pirate of the North Sea. It was not, however, intended to deprive the trawlers of their sole harmless luxury in the shape of cheap and good tobacco. If the coper had to be banished, her legitimate trade should be maintained. At

the outset of the mission work it was not practicable to undertake the sale of tobacco, but in the year 1884 the mission ships (at that time five in number) began to vend good tobacco of English manufacture, free of duty, at one shilling per pound, and ever since the supply has been maintained, with the magnificent practical result that the obnoxious continental craft has been virtually swept from the North Sea. The permanency of the good which has thus been achieved will in the future be rendered secure by an international arrangement which has been come to by the Governments of several of the countries bordering the North Sea, whereby the sale of spirits in the fishing grounds will be illegal; and further that no vessel shall ever trade amongst the North Sea fleets without the special licence of the Government of the State from which she sails. The checkmating of the copers has thus been a complete success, and though the results which have been obtained when put in this form may appear simply to be negative, yet there is in reality a most bright and positive side to the picture. Drunkenness has been practically annihilated in the fleets; a spirit of self-reliance has arisen amongst the men; home comforts have accumulated; precious lives have been saved; and so marked has been the effect of this movement amongst the trawlers that some of the men who manned the copers have themselves recognized it, and heartily blessed the mission ship.

Serious cases of accident and disease have always been rife amongst the smacksmen. Until the humane work now in progress commenced there was nothing beyond the most rudimentary and unskilled treatment for wounds or illnesses to be obtained in the fleets, which is, it may be added, another way of saying that there was really no suitable treatment whatsoever to be had; and the consequences were simply appalling. For example: a man in cleaning fish sustains a severe gash to his hand from a hidden fish-bone, with the result that poisoning sets in; another slips and falls down the companion, severely bruising his head; a third, in a rough sea, has his leg jammed between the smack's boat and the sides of the steamer; a fourth is suffering from a sharp attack of pleurisy; a fifth is succumbing to acute consumption; but the suffering, the anxiety and the sorrow must be borne, without comfort and without aid on the Silver Pits or the dreary Dogger, two hundred miles from England and home. It is a qualified surgeon and a floating hospital that are required, say all who best know the necessities of the case; and these are what the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen is now providing in many of the fleets, and endeavouring to establish in all. Ten mission vessels cruise in the North Sea, and two further ships are on the stocks at Yarmouth. The latest addition to the fleet on active service is the "Queen Victoria," a vessel so named by the Queen's special desire, and the hospital arrangements during the first cruise of this ship have been under the immediate control of Mr. Frederick Treves,

F.R.C.S., Chairman of the Hospital Committee of the Society. That this part of the work has been efficiently performed will be generally admitted when it is stated that the official records of the mission show that over seven thousand patients passed through the hands of the various medical officers during the year 1888, about one hundred and fifty of them being cases which had to be treated for periods of various length within the hospital on the mission ship. Even while these lines are being penned, news has been received at the headquarters of the mission of a poor fellow whose leg had been broken by a severe blow from the capstan on his trawling-smack at sea, and who had been admirably cared for by the young surgeon acting as medical officer on the "Edward Birkbeck." This gentleman had sat up with his patient through a long and trying night, and on the following day had transferred him to the fish-carrying steamer in the ingenious hospital stretcher specially designed for the use of the mission by Mr. M. J. Darke, one of its London employés, and in this the injured man made the passage to the Thames without experiencing, as he declared, any pain whatsoever. In the same tight-fitting and comfortable ambulance he was conveyed to the London Hospital, where his leg was set, and he received the most careful nursing and attention. Such an incident as this amply proves, first, that the necessity for this medical and surgical work exists amongst the fishermen, and, secondly, that the requisite operations are fully and faithfully discharged.

Formerly each of the mission smacks in the North Sea engaged in trawling, like the ordinary fishing vessels with which it cruised; but in the autumn of the past year the Council of the Institution, having carefully considered all the facts, decided unanimously and unhesitatingly to discontinue such trawling operations for the future, and to provide ample hospital and dispensary accommodation upon all their vessels. In the larger ships there will now be room for no less than ten in-patients; a cosy cabin is provided for a resident surgeon; quarters also are found for a clergyman or other missioner who may chance to be out for the religious work; ample space is set apart for the storage and sale of tobacco to the smacksmen; the great proportion of the hold of the vessel formerly required for the stowage of fish-boxes is set free for the reception of a large concourse of the fishermen; so that now the mission ship is not only *per se* the admired of all admirers, but there are few smacksmen in the fishing grounds who do not recognize the kindness of the generous people ashore who have provided her, and the incalculable good which she is fitted to—and really does—accomplish. "There is sorrow on the sea; it cannot be quiet," says the writer of old, and the singer of a recent day speaks of—

"The fierce confederate storm
Of sorrow barricadoed evermore
Within the walls of cities;"

but it may confidently be said that if the sorrows of city life were as efficiently grappled with and their causes removed, as have been the physical sufferings and sorrow of the laborious toilers in the distant German Ocean, it would be a cheerful omen and a happy result for millions of poverty-haunted and anguish-stricken human creatures.

The winter winds on the North Sea are as bitter as they are boisterous, and when the gale is accompanied by blinding sleet and snow, and the smacksmen on the deck of his tiny craft is frequently subjected, in the course of his midnight vigil, to a douche of salt water from the whirling wave, it is at least some protection from the furious blast and the icy cold to be well wrapped up under his oilskin coat and sou'-wester, with such cosy articles as a long thick comforter round the neck, a woollen Crimean helmet covering the head and part of the face, a thick pair of mittens for the hands, and a huge pair of worsted stockings worn inside the sea-boots, but extending far up the leg above the soiled and weather-beaten trousers. In the summer, too, these comforts are not unacceptable, for, as previously stated, even in the month of June or July it is occasionally bitterly cold on the Silver Pits or the Dogger Bank. A pair of mittens with a long top, moreover, effectually prevents the painful and ugly sea-blisters from which so many of the North Sea smacksmen suffered ere the days of friendly mission work dawned in their midst. These boils are occasioned by the constant chafing of the oilskin coat, which is so frequent a portion of the trawler's garb. Vast quantities of warm woollen comforts have been supplied by the mission from the very commencement of its work; at first gratuitously, but latterly at a nominal price, many of the smacksmen having expressed a wish to manifest their appreciation of the Society's efforts by paying a small sum for such articles as their contribution towards the maintenance of the work. All who have seen the trawler in his winter habitat on the wild North Sea will concur in the opinion that a strong necessity existed for such an addition to the smacksmen's outfit, and the general verdict to the fact that the Mission has efficiently met the need may be challenged when it is stated that, at a mere fraction of their actual cost, there were distributed amongst the men and lads during 1888 many thousands of mittens, comforters, sea-boot stockings and helmets.

"As well for the body as the soul" is the motto of the Mission, and right well have the physical requirements of the trawlers been met. An endeavour will now be made to show in what respect the mission has discharged the second part of the object originally contemplated in its undertakings. Without trespassing in any manner whatsoever upon controverted topics, it may be convenient to speak of these efforts for the social reform of the men as (a) mental, (b) moral, and (c) spiritual.

I. Mental. Ten years ago the deep sea fisherman was, to put the matter plainly, an ignorant, careless human animal, a clubbable man (to use Dr. Johnson's word) so far as his mates were concerned, but at daggers drawn with society. Books, politics, religion, speaking generally, were outside the pale of his interest; in stoical indifference he paced the dreary round of his circumscribed life till, at the close thereof, he passed from the scene of his toil and trouble a brave, unbaffled, but most untutored spirit. The Mission has, however, grappled with the problem presented by the mental condition of these men. It has even taught certain of them to read; its agents have lectured (in sailor's phrase, spun yarns) on all sorts of subjects; they have gone about in the fleets; they have distributed immense quantities of good, sound, substantial reading; and the result is that a recent visitor declares that he has been "filled with amazement at the fluency and eloquence of the trawlers' speech, the clearness of their ideas, the fervour and pathos of their expression."

II. Moral. Surely it is something to have banished drunkenness from more than a dozen populous floating villages; to have engendered a spirit of self-help and reliance; to have brightened the trawler's home by changing the character of its head and main support; to have given to the State a sober, peaceful, thoughtful citizen; and to have united in fraternal bonds a community of men formerly, indeed, clubbable, but, in essential moral elements, strangers to the kindly joys of true human fellowship.

III. Spiritual. Under this head it were easy to talk of creeds and of "isms," to set in motion the Babel of words and the spirit of envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness. The duty of silence, which Carlyle was ever preaching and never practising, shall here be regarded. This only shall be said, that through the ministrations of many hard-working and devoted volunteer labourers, some of whom were churchmen and some dissenters, the great nature of the North Sea trawler has been stirred by the doctrines which of old moved the souls of greater men than himself, and that his faith has been fruitful in beauty of character, and the display of conduct such as the most cynical and sceptical can appreciate. Here let an avowed cynic and sceptic speak: "As to what are called the conversions, I can say nothing in the theological way, but I judge by the results which I have seen. Now, I could run round the fleets and pick out at least three hundred men who were once something more than inoffensive ne'er-do-wells—they were active and offensive blackguards. These fellows do not ever cant; they have become civilized men, and if their religious exercises do become demonstrative, what of that? They are good in all relations of life; they are fine workmen; and, if they cry for pardon and pity, who shall blame them? If I sneered at one of them, I should never get rid of my sense of shame

during life; it would be a crime against humanity. You must rouse strong emotions in order to bring forth the deeper nature of rude and ignorant men; their ideas are all rather crude, and you cannot teach them subtleties." After all, whether the old unquestioning faith or the vaunted honest doubt of a later day be the worthier or the nobler, it is surely well that the life which leads melodious lays should be undisturbed by the taint of shadowed hint.

To sum up therefore, it may be said, without fear, that alike on physical, social and religious grounds the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen has a strong claim on the sympathies of the English people, inasmuch as, in their name, it has sought to discharge, and has marvellously succeeded in discharging, a duty of no mean importance to a large and deserving body of their fellow-citizens—men who were long cut off from social privileges and social joys, but who are now (and will in the future become more) worthy of being described as deserving of an honoured place amongst that democracy which is the backbone of England's strength.

JUST IN TIME.

By E. J. GOODMAN,

AUTHOR OF "TOO CURIOUS."

REJECTED!

Year after year that was his fate. At first Claude Forrest took it quietly and carelessly enough. What else was he to expect? Only just out of his studentship, only just beginning to practise his profession as a painter, how could he hope to secure a place on the sacred walls of the Royal Academy for his juvenile productions? No, he must wait and work—he felt that he was gaining power and skill every year—and at last his time would come.

For there was one trait in the character of Claude Forrest which formed in about equal parts a failing and a virtue. He was very obstinate. When he took a notion into his head it stuck there, and all the advice and persuasion in the world would not get it out. This was unfortunate sometimes, as Claude was not a very practical sort of person—what artist ever is?—and his notions were occasionally unwise or capricious. Yet that same obstinacy also stood him at times in good stead. Thanks to it he had resolved to be a painter in spite of the opposition of his father, who wanted him to be a man of business, and it was with the same dogged determination that he continued year after year to besiege the doors of Burlington House.

But even the most energetic and persevering of mankind must feel a little discouraged by repeated disappointments, and the persistency with which the great ones of the Royal Academy seemed to set their faces against Claude Forrest's work at last began to tell somewhat even on his not easily daunted spirit. He was improving, of that he felt sure. He had already got a footing in some of the minor exhibitions, and his little pictures of sea-coast life—his favourite subjects—mere "pot-boilers" as they were, had begun to find some favour among the dealers. Still the supreme triumph of admission to the galleries of Burlington House was denied him, and every season he carried away his small canvas under his arm from the portals of that temple of art with increasing disgust.

Would he never have any luck? Hundreds of works much less meritorious than his own managed somehow to get accepted and hung, works by men as little known to the public as himself. What could be the reason that he was always rejected? Always.

And now matters were getting serious. For he was engaged to be married to the sweetest, prettiest, dearest girl in the world, and those aspirations for fame and fortune which he had so long cherished now had a stronger motive than ever.

Amy Vaughan was only waiting till he should feel himself getting on well enough to support a wife. She had no money, and all they had to look forward to was his ultimate success.

They had been engaged just about a year. Claude met Amy for the first time at Shellerton-by-the-Sea, under romantic circumstances, which will presently be described, and that happy year of love-making had been for such a hard-working fellow as he a comparatively idle one.

He had painted several "pot-boilers," and had sold some of them, and had executed one other work, of which more anon. But as the time drew near to "sending-in day" Claude Forrest took one of his "fits" into his head. He resolved *not* to seek admission and risk rejection at the hands of the Academy Council.

"No, love," he said in his most determined tone to the girl of his heart. "I don't mean to send anything this year."

"What!" exclaimed Amy, "not *the* picture?"

"Certainly not," replied Claude with energy. "That is *my* picture; the work not of my hand only, but of my mind and my heart. I will never exhibit that, never sell it. It is sacred to myself for ever."

"Oh, Claude!" exclaimed Amy, the tears rising to her eyes; "don't say that. It's the best thing you ever painted. It is beautiful, quite perfect, and such a nice subject too! I am sure they would accept it and give it a very good place."

"Perhaps so," replied obstinate Claude; "but I am not going to give them the chance. There, say no more about it, dearest; I have made up my mind."

Whenever Claude Forrest used those last determined words they were to him as a law of the Medes and Persians. They represented some resolve from which nothing, from which nobody, could turn him. He had said it and there was an end of the matter.

The picture in question stood before them on Claude's easel. The artist himself was seated, cigarette in mouth and palette, brush and mahlstick in hand, putting some last loving touches to the almost finished work. His lady-love stood looking over his shoulder with admiring eyes and saddened heart, proud of her lover's talent, but grieved at his obstinacy.

It was a pretty picture indeed, and you could see at a glance who had been the model for the single figure depicted in it. It was Amy herself represented in that strange and dramatic position in which she was found when she and Claude met for the first time.

A lovely girl simply but daintily dressed in a plain blue serge costume is standing on a clump of rock surrounded by the sea.

The waves are blue in the distance, but they are tinged with the colour of the sand in the foreground. You can perceive that the young lady, though on this little desolate island, is not very far from the shore. Her crimson parasol and an open book lie at her feet on the rock upon which she appears to have been sitting, and it is plain that she has allowed herself to be surrounded by the sea unmindful of the danger of the rising tide, for there is a look of alarm, yet mingled with joy and hope, in her face as she gazes upon you out of the canvas, standing there with arms outstretched, a clever bit of "foreshortening" by the way, as though appealing for help to some unseen rescuer.

Is the story intelligible? Does the reader guess its antecedents and its sequel? Surely! Yes, one day Miss Amy Vaughan rambling along the shore at low water strayed some little way out upon the sands to a point where a cluster of rocks, their surface nicely dried by the sun, offered a tempting seat. So she sat herself down and soon became absorbed in her book, a novel of the most thrilling description, giving little heed to the gradually advancing tide. The water had not indeed reached the foot of the rock on which she was sitting with her face seaward, when she thought it time to retire. But on rising and turning towards the shore she found to her dismay that her retreat was cut off. The rocks stood considerably above the level of the surrounding sand, and the treacherous sea had slipped quietly round, interposing an alarming barrier of water between herself and the beach.

It was but a few yards to the shore, yet she did not know how deep the intervening water might be, and was afraid to wade through the surf. The tide was rising rapidly and in a few minutes the waves had covered the sand and were lapping the foot of the rock on which she was standing. What was she to do? There was no boat in sight, and landward nothing to be seen but the long stretch of beach and the cliffs rising behind it. Trembling with terror poor Amy cried for help, but for some time there was no response, no sound but the lapping of the cruel waves that seemed to hunger for her young life.

Once more she cried for help, and the next moment, so she afterwards said, she must have fainted from fear, when a voice—a man's voice—was heard shouting in reply. Then from a gap in the cliff near at hand a young gentleman, a stranger, suddenly emerged. He had a portfolio under his arm, but he threw it away from him without a moment's hesitation and promptly rushed to the edge of the beach and waded into the sea. Fortunately it was not very deep, nor was the surf heavy, and in a few moments Claude Forrest had Amy Vaughan safe in his arms.

He carried her to the shore and deposited her secure and dry on the beach, while he was wet to the waist.

And this was their first meeting. Claude, it need hardly be said, accompanied the fair castaway to the lodgings where she and

her mother resided, and it is equally unnecessary to add that he was overwhelmed with expressions of gratitude. Nor will the reader be surprised to learn that a pleasant and familiar acquaintance resulted from this little adventure, and that it ended at last in love!

Here is the story of the picture, the picture which Claude Forrest painted with all his heart and soul in his work, dwelling with loving care upon every detail and accessory of the scene, and depicting the mingled expression of hope and fear in the fair heroine's countenance with masterly skill.

It was indeed a very clever, a very interesting picture, one that could not fail to be greatly admired if exhibited, and pretty sure to sell. But no, Claude Forrest would not exhibit it, would not sell it; upon that he had made up his mind—that unalterable mind of his. It was his own picture, and he would not part with it for any fame or fortune it might bring him.

Amy was wofully disappointed. It was such a nice picture; he had never painted anything half so good. It was sure to be accepted, and she would be so proud to see it hung—hung on the line as it was certain to be. Wouldn't he send it just to please her? No, he wouldn't. It was very unkind of him. He couldn't help that. Then she began to cry. He said she was very foolish, and then he promised to work very hard and send a really fine picture next year. No, he *must* send that. He would *not*—he had made up his mind.

"You must, you *must*, you *must*."

"I tell you I *won't*."

"Do, darling—do—to oblige me."

"Amy, love, don't keep on asking me in that way. You heard what I said."

"Never mind that—you *will* send it to the Academy, now—won't you? There's a pet. Do, darling, like my own dear (kiss), sweet (kiss), kind (kiss), naughty (kiss), obstinate (kiss) Claude."

"But, Amy, love," cried Claude as soon as he could recover his breath after all this osculation, "this picture is really very precious to me indeed. I cannot find it in my heart to exhibit it for all sorts of people to stare at, even if the Academy accepted it. And to think of such a picture being rejected! Amy, darling, it would break my heart to carry it away."

"No, it wouldn't. That's only a figure of speech. Besides they won't reject it, and so you *will* send it, won't you, darling?"

She was "at him" again and again on the same subject, day after day. Claude was very obstinate, but so was Amy, and when a woman's obstinacy is pitted against a man's, under such circumstances as we have described, the issue is hardly doubtful.

About a week after her first appeal and his refusal, Amy Vaughan was once more in her lover's studio "worrying" him as he called it, worse than ever.

He was sitting at his easel, still giving "one more touch" to the beloved picture, and she was lolling carelessly in the arm-chair on the "throne" where he perched his models. Amy was playing with some flowers which she had brought him for artistic purposes, and one of these she had selected from the bunch. She began to pick it to pieces, leaf by leaf, softly murmuring to herself:

"He sends it."

"Really, Amy——"

"He sends it not."

"My dear girl——"

"He sends it."

"Don't be silly."

"He sends it not."

"I shall be vexed presently."

"He sends it."

"What a plague you are!"

"He sends it not."

And so this pretty dialogue went on till Amy, plucking the last leaf of the flower, exclaimed in triumph:

"He sends it!"

"He won't do anything of the kind," grunted Claude.

"Oh, but I haven't done yet," cried the persistent girl.

Then taking up another flower she began to pull this to pieces as she had done the other.

"They hang it," she muttered.

"Oh! hang it!" exclaimed Claude.

"They hang it not."

"I wish you would leave off."

"They hang it."

"You are giving yourself useless trouble."

"They hang it not."

"That will be the end anyhow."

"They hang it."

Claude ceased his observations and left his beloved to pursue her amusement without interruption. There were but a few leaves of the flower left, and she actually trembled and turned pale as she eagerly detached them one by one.

"They hang it—they hang it not. They hang it—they hang it not. Oh! dear, that is the last—No. I declare! Here is one more—only a little one, but it will do. They hang it!"

Then leaping from the "throne" she rushed to her lover, and, throwing her arms round his neck, cried:

"Claude, dear Claude. You *must* do as I wish. I know I have been teasing you terribly about this picture. But my whole heart is in the request I make you. *Do*, darling, for my sake, for the sake of the love I bear you; for the sake of the many happy years I hope we shall have together—send this picture in."

She spoke so seriously, so earnestly, in a tone of gravity that she

had not used before, that he could not help feeling touched by her appeal. Little by little his resolve melted away. Even his obstinacy was powerless before her tender, her persistent persuasion, and so at last he consented. The picture should be sent in.

And there was no time to be lost. The very next day was the last allowed for "outsiders" by the rules of the Academy. Amy went home and to bed very happy. Claude remained sad and uneasy, and passed a sleepless night.

All the next morning he hung about his studio, hesitating and worried. He was bound to keep his promise, but he was sorry he had given it. The more he looked at that picture, the more reluctant he felt to part with it; to expose it to the gaze of strangers, or worse still to find it thrown back on his hands—rejected.

He duly prepared the necessary label to be affixed to the back of the picture stating its title and his name and address, and had written out the usual letter to the secretary in conformity with the regulations. But these processes occupied a great deal of time, and most of the day was wasted in vain regrets and delays. He did not notice how the time was passing, and became aware of it only when, late in the afternoon, the door of his studio opened and Amy Vaughan suddenly appeared.

"What, Claude!" she cried, "not gone yet? Oh dear, you have not changed your mind again, have you? You are not going to refuse to send the picture after all?"

"No, love," replied the artist with a sigh, "I'll send it. I am going up to town presently to take it myself."

"But do you know what time it is? It is getting late. When is the last train to London?"

Recalled to this practical consideration, a shock of alarm suddenly seized Claude's mind. The last train to town must be due to start somewhere about that time. The thought that Amy might think he was purposely delaying his undertaking till it would be impossible to perform it pained him. He hastily seized a time-table and then glanced at his watch. The last train would leave in five minutes' time, and it was hardly possible to reach the station soon enough to catch it.

"Amy," he cried, "forgive me. I really meant to take the picture as I promised. But it is useless to do so now. It is too late."

Amy stood and looked at him, cold and pale as a statue, gazing at him with sad, earnest eyes and with lips compressed.

She said nothing, but he read that look, and it stung him to the quick. She thought he had been wilfully deceiving her.

His mind was made up. There was not a moment to be lost. Snatching up his hat and seizing the precious picture, without another word he darted out of the room and out of the house.

Fortunately, he had not proceeded more than a few paces when an empty fly drove up. He leaped into it and ordered the man to

drive to the station with his utmost speed to catch the last train to town.

"I'll do my best, sir," said the driver.

Once seated in the carriage and with the memory of that look in his Amy's eyes, Claude Forrest hoped as he had never hoped for anything before, that he might reach the station in time. The man drove quickly, but yet the vehicle seemed to crawl, so eager was Claude not to disappoint his beloved.

He reached the station, he jumped out of the fly, not stopping to pay the driver, who, knowing him by sight, considerably called after him, "It will be all right, sir." Then he rushed to the platform, for the sound of the bell had warned him that the train was just about to start.

"Ticket, sir?" cried the guard at the wicket.

"I have no ticket," replied Claude.

"Then you can't go through."

"But I must."

"You're too late, sir; the train's just off."

Claude was in despair. In another moment it would be indeed too late. But just then a voice sounded in his ear, a voice with which he was familiar.

"Want a ticket? All right, old fellow—take mine. There, no thanks—off you go."

It was good-natured Tom Burton, a resident in Shellerton with whom Claude was well acquainted. He afterwards said he saw the position at a glance, and having no urgent need himself to go to London that night, thus transferred his ticket to the eager artist.

Nor was his good-nature in vain. The train was already in motion, but regardless of the company's by-laws and the warning shouts of railway porters, Claude, with his picture under his arm, rushed after it, turned the handle of the first door he could reach, and tumbled headlong, picture and all—fortunately without damaging his precious burden—on to the floor of the compartment.

Once safe in the train Claude began to feel almost sorry he had not missed it. He had done his best to keep his promise to Amy, but yet he would have been glad if he had been unable to carry out his intention.

For this sending in of a picture which to him had been a labour of love in the deepest and tenderest sense, was the most unwelcome task he had ever undertaken. Whether it was accepted or whether it was rejected he did not look forward to the prospect with pleasure.

So it was with a sinking heart that he proceeded on his way to Piccadilly, and deposited this work of his heart with the callous porter of Burlington House; and he left it there, and departed with much the same feeling as one experiences in quitting a cemetery after the funeral of a beloved friend.

It was all very foolish, very unreasonable, no doubt. But such

is the conduct of all sentimental persons, and Claude Forrest was very sentimental indeed. Besides, if his feelings were analyzed it might be found that he was not a little annoyed at having allowed his resolve to be persuaded away. Nothing vexes obstinate people so much as being induced or forced to yield or make concessions. However, he reflected, with his usual luck, the picture would be rejected and what would Amy say to that?

So the days that followed passed rather uncomfortably for him. He returned at once to Shellerton, but Amy's delight at hearing that the picture had actually been safely left at Burlington House found no echo in his dissatisfied breast.

"It won't stay there long," he said.

"Won't it?" cried Amy. "You'll see."

The days passed and never before had he felt so anxious about the fate of a picture which he had sent to the Academy. He had accustomed himself in past times to dismiss such matters from his mind or only to laugh and joke about them with his friends. But he could not joke about this, and even Amy's most skilful coaxing could not allay his uneasiness.

The period when the notification of his fate usually arrived came at last, but nothing came with it. He attached no significance to the fact. Probably the picture had been classed among the "doubtfuls"—he had once or twice enjoyed that questionable distinction before. But it always amounted to the same thing in the end.

Meanwhile Amy did her best to divert his mind from the one topic which absorbed it. She never alluded to the picture, and would not allow him to talk about it, but dexterously changed the subject whenever he seemed inclined to touch upon it. And so well did she succeed at last, that he positively was not giving a thought to the picture and its fate when one fine morning the post brought him the usual "varnishing ticket" inviting him to "inspect such of his works as had been accepted by the council." And the picture was not only accepted, but hung.

Unbounded was the exultation of Amy when she heard the good news. She danced and clapped her hands, and cried, "There, I told you so! I told you so!"

And even Claude himself could not repress a feeling of pleasure at the reflection that at last he had succeeded in making his way into the Royal Academy.

"But I daresay the picture is skied," he said, reverting once more to his gloomy view of the situation.

No, it was not skied. It was hung in one of the best rooms in the exhibition, in an excellent place and light, and on the line!

He could not but give way to a feeling of intense delight at witnessing the joyful spectacle of his picture, the picture in which his Amy was the chief point of attraction, thus displayed in a position of honour. He telegraphed the news at once to his

beloved and received her enthusiastic congratulations half-an-hour afterwards.

Amy, of course, came up to town with her mother for the opening day, and how proud she was to see *the* picture hung on the line and so prettily described in the catalogue! There it was :

"563. 'Save Me!' . . . *Claude Forrest.*"

Then to see the little crowds of fashionable and critical people gathering around it, and to listen to their remarks, generally favourable, and in many cases quite enthusiastic. Oh, it was delightful!

Claude himself could not be insensible to the sweetness of this first taste of fame, and the dear girl who was the main cause of his success was dearer to him than ever.

"I am sure you will get a lot of money for it, Claude," exclaimed Amy.

"I am sure I shall get nothing of the sort," he replied. "I don't mean to sell it."

"Oh, but you must," persisted his pretty tormentor. "What is the good of painting a picture if you don't sell it?"

"I painted that picture for love, not for money."

"But why not for both?"

"It is no use talking, Amy. I have made up my mind."

Yes, he had indeed. Were it not that it was against the rules of the Academy, he would have placed a label on the frame inscribed, "Not for sale." But he did what he could. He had no entry made in the secretary's price list, so that intending purchasers, if any, might seek in vain to ascertain the market value of the work.

A few days passed and Claude Forrest and Amy Vaughan were once more back in their respective quarters at Shellerton-by-the-Sea. The notices of the exhibition had appeared in the newspapers and several contained highly laudatory remarks with reference to "Save Me!" These Amy cut out and carefully pasted in a very large nicely-bound scrap-book, destined, she said, to form a collection of Claude's favourable critiques "for years."

She did not worry him any more about his resolve not to sell the picture.

"Wait," she reflected, "till he has a chance. Then we shall see."

She had not very long to wait. One day a stranger presented himself at Claude's studio where he was busily engaged on the rough sketch for a new picture, a work with which he intended to take the utmost pains, and which he meant, if possible, to exhibit and sell.

The stranger was a short, stout, elderly man, with white hair and a red face, and quaintly rough, blunt manners. He was shabbily, or rather carelessly, dressed and was altogether what the fastidious would call "quite a common person."

"Are you Mr. Claude Forrest?" he asked as he entered that eminent painter's studio, without taking off his hat.

"Yes, I am," replied Claude, with the same bluntness, and with a stare and a frown at the rude stranger.

"My name's Bigg—Humphrey Bigg," observed the intruder.

"Oh! is it?" said Claude indifferently.

"Yes," replied the visitor with a sort of croaking laugh. "There's nothing big about me except my name."

"Oh, indeed! And what is your business, Mr. Bigg?"

"I haven't got any business now. I've retired. But I know what you mean. What do I want here, eh?"

"Quite so."

Claude began to think he had to deal with a lunatic, so he kept his eye on Mr. Bigg.

"Well," said the queer stranger, "I want your picture."

"What picture?" asked Claude.

"That one in the 'Cademy."

"You can't have it."

"Sold?"

"No."

"Oh! What will you take for it?"

"It is not for sale."

"I'll give you fifty pounds for it."

"I tell you it is not for sale."

"Sixty."

"Are you deaf, Mr. Bigg?"

"No, I'm not deaf."

"Then you heard what I said. I don't intend to sell that picture."

"Seventy."

"Is this a joke, Mr. Bigg?"

"No, it's not a joke; it's a bid."

"I won't take it."

"Eighty."

"Really, you don't seem to understand me, Mr. Bigg. For reasons of my own I will not part with that picture for *any* money."

"Ninety."

"If you persist, Mr. Bigg, I shall regard your conduct as offensive."

"A hundred."

"If you are not deaf, you must be mad. Be good enough, sir, to leave my studio."

"Hundred and ten."

Claude was now very angry. He put down his palette and brushes and glared at his persecutor, who, to do him justice, stood before him quite unmoved.

What might have happened next it were hard to say, but at

this moment the door of the studio opened and Amy Vaughan entered.

She looked bewitchingly lovely in her tight-fitting blue serge dress, the same in which she had been depicted in "Save Me!"

Mr. Bigg, of course, recognized her at a glance, and with equal rapidity took in the whole situation.

"I beg pardon," Amy hesitated; "I didn't know you had a visitor."

"Don't disturb yourself for me, miss," said Mr. Bigg with gruff politeness. "I am only doing a little bit of business with Mr. Forrest."

"The business is at an end, Mr. Bigg," said Claude. "Good-day, sir."

"Where were we, Mr. Forrest?" asked the imperturbable Bigg. "We'd got as far as a hundred and ten, hadn't we?"

"Really, Mr. Bigg," cried Claude; "this is too much."

"You mean not enough. A hundred and twenty."

Amy looked from one to the other. With her quick woman's instinct she guessed in a moment what was going on. She could see that this uncouth stranger was making Claude an offer for *the* picture, and that he, with characteristic obstinacy, was refusing it. She went up to him, and, laying her hand on his shoulder, whispered in his ear:

"Oh, Claude, does this—this gentleman want to buy 'Save Me?'"

"That's just it, miss," Mr. Bigg replied for the artist. "I have made him an offer—several offers—for that painting. I began at fifty and worked it up to a hundred and twenty. We are getting on."

"Mr. Bigg," exclaimed Claude in a tone of great irritation, "I——"

"A hundred and thirty."

"We must have an end of this farce," cried Claude. "Mr. Bigg, leave my house."

"Yes," begged Amy, "do go, please."

She said these words with a peculiar meaning in her eyes, which Mr. Bigg readily understood, and would have responded to with a wink but that he feared to spoil the opportunity evidently within his reach.

"All right, miss," he said. "I'm off."

Then turning on his heel he moved to the door, opened it, and walked out.

Left alone with her lover Amy opened fire at once upon him.

"Claude," she pleaded, "you must not act in this way. It is foolish, cruel, wrong. Here you have a chance of selling that picture for a sum which would be large enough for us to—to—you know what I mean. Claude, dear Claude, you *must* not refuse it—for my sake."

It might be tedious to detail the conversation that followed; to record the precise arguments with which Claude Forrest endeavoured to explain his reasons for rejecting Mr. Bigg's offer and determining to keep that picture. Nor need we repeat the words, they could not be called arguments, with which Amy combated his resolve. She did not argue. She kissed, and coaxed, and cried, and for a good half-hour she persisted in "worrying" him just as she had "worried" him before. What could he do? He could not be angry with her—not really angry. He could not order her out of the studio as he had ordered Mr. Bigg. And so they went on. Stronger and stronger became her entreaties and persuasions, weaker and weaker grew his arguments and resolves. The end may be guessed—it was inevitable. At last he yielded, as he yielded before.

"Well," he exclaimed, "but the man has gone now."

"Yes," replied Amy, with a bright twinkle in her triumphant eyes; "but perhaps he has not gone very far."

In an instant she had slipped out of the studio, and there, just as she expected, was Mr. Humphrey Bigg calmly walking up and down the street. Amy beckoned to him and he approached with leisurely step.

"Done it?" was all he asked.

"Yes," was her only answer.

Then Mr. Bigg re-entered the studio and, to use his own expressive words, "clinched the business." That is to say, he sat down, drew out his cheque-book and there and then made out a draft payable to Claude Forrest, Esq., for one hundred and thirty pounds, the amount of his last bid for "Save Me!"

Claude had protested against this proceeding—declared that he would not accept more than Mr. Bigg's original offer; but his strange visitor coolly ignored all he had to say and quietly made his own arrangements, as though the artist were not present. As for Amy, she was too acute to risk the conclusion of the negotiation by interference, so she stood by a silent and passive spectator of the little scene.

Claude at last took Mr. Bigg's cheque, sadly it is true, but not ungraciously. He could not but feel that the man had acted with great generosity. So he signed the document his patron drew up, making over the picture to him, and shook hands cordially with him when he rose to take his departure.

The cheque was all right. It was duly honoured; but no more was seen or heard of Mr. Humphrey Bigg until after the close of the exhibition, when Mr. Bigg duly applied to him for the formal order authorizing him to take possession of his property. Having received this he appeared to have promptly claimed and carried off the work of art he had purchased.

It was long before Claude was quite reconciled to the fate of his beloved picture; but regrets of this sort do not last for ever. Amy

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did her best to console him for his "loss" and succeeded as she always did. Besides, he set very hard to work on his new picture and this effectually diverted his mind.

Next year he was again accepted, again hung on the line, and again "sold." That was a happy summer for Claude and Amy Forrest, now husband and wife, the first of many happy years each more prosperous than the last.

For Claude Forrest made continued progress; constantly rising higher and higher in public estimation, and at last achieving the enviable distinction of election as A.R.A.

He was now rich and famous; occupying a palatial house in Kensington, a beautiful home, full of beautiful objects, including half-a-dozen fair-haired darlings in picturesque velvets and fanciful stuffs, but nothing more beautiful than his Amy.

There was only one thorn among these roses. As the years passed he felt a constantly increasing desire to see once more that picture which was the foundation of his fame and fortune, and to show it to his children to whom he was ever talking about it. But it had disappeared with Mr. Bigg and he tried in vain to discover its whereabouts.

"I would give any money to have that picture back again, Amy," he would say. "If I could get at that queer old fellow, Bigg, I would imitate his example and make him bids up to thousands, till I forced him to part with it. But what is the use of talking? Perhaps the man is dead and the picture is sold or burnt or lost."

"Yes, darling. I must say I would like to have it again," said his wife, "if only for the sake of the children."

One day Claude Forrest was hard at work in his fine, spacious studio, painting at his great picture, afterwards to be called "The Rescue"—he always had a love for that class of subjects, and this was an exciting scene of life-saving from a wreck—when Amy suddenly burst in upon him with a troop of children at her heels—a grave breach of his rules and regulations.

She had a letter in her hand, inclosed in a long blue envelope on which was stamped the name of a firm of solicitors. The postman had just delivered it. She said afterwards that she had a sort of presentiment that this missive contained some important and agreeable intelligence. She was not mistaken.

Claude tore open the envelope, and as he read the letter his loving wife read his face. She saw that he had indeed received good news.

"Guess," he cried with a bright light in his eyes, "what this is about."

"About *the* picture?"

"You are right. Humphrey Bigg is dead. This letter is from his lawyers, and it tells me that after carrying the picture all round the world with him, to Australia, China, America, he left it by will

to the painter of it, and now I can have it back whenever I like to claim it."

"Oh! that is good news indeed," exclaimed Mrs. Forrest, as she ran into her husband's arms and all their children danced round them clapping their hands with joy,

"We are going to see 'Save Me!' 'Save Me!' 'Save Me!'" they shouted, wild with delight and rushing about the house repeating the cry till their good nurse came tumbling down stairs in dire alarm fearing that all their pretty frocks had caught fire, at the least, and that they were being burnt to death and were shrieking for succour.

So "Save Me!" was thrown back once more on the artist's hands, but not rejected. Again was it "hung on the line," but this time in his own private exhibition, in his own happy home.

There he would often sit gazing at it long and lovingly, after he had finished his day's work.

One evening he was thus contemplating it, and absorbed so deeply in thought that his wife could not help asking him:

"What are you thinking about, love?"

"Thinking about? Oh! nothing. I was only thinking that—yes—I am glad I didn't miss that train."

A TRIBUTE OF LOVE.

WHEN, bending o'er the beauty of a rose,
I trace the harmony
Of soft, voluptuous petals that unclose—
It is thy face I see.

When through the quiet woods the thrush's note
Comes echoing full and clear
With wealth of praise as from an angel's throat,
It is thy voice I hear.

When from the earth I lift my reverent eyes
To the vast arch above,
The azure, grey, or purple-flooded skies
Do but reflect my love.

All light, all joy, all sweetness and all song,
Earth's glow and melody
Proclaim thy graces and to thee belong
And emanate from thee.

Therefore this truth beyond all truths I feel—
Since thou canst all things give,
I thank my God for all things when I kneel,
And thank Him thou dost live.

MARIE CONNOR.

A DEAD FAIRY.

By FAYR MADOC,

AUTHOR OF "THE TEST OF CLEVERNESS," "THEREBY," "MARGARET JERMIN," ETC.

I WAS walking down my grass-path one moist autumnal day, thinking (as all good Englishmen should often do) of Shakespeare. The afternoon was muggy, the west wind was blowing fitfully, and a faint smell of decaying vegetation pervaded the air. The tall bushy chrysanthemums brushed against me, and wetted me with their burden of rain-drops; one pale rose gleamed forth upon a straggling standard; yellow leaves lay at my feet, sodden with the last shower; above me hung a sombre canopy; in the west, an angry yellow light spread itself along the sky beneath the grey and lowering clouds. Suddenly, a frog hopped across my path, and I involuntarily cast down my eyes. The creature disappeared instantly, but as he vanished I caught sight of a strange object which lay half-concealed beneath the rank undergrowth of this wild and untended bed.

"Surely," I thought, "it is a dead fairy!"

And I stayed my steps and regarded it attentively. Yes, it was surely the figure of a mannikin scarce two inches long, dressed in a russet coat, with a red cap on its head and high-heeled red shoes on its tiny feet, lying there prone and motionless—*dead*.

I stood spell-bound at the sight. That a fairy should lie before me, silent, still, impotent, defunct, seemed incomprehensible. Shakespeare, who knew the fairies well, never wrote of a fairy's death. His fairies are always alive and full of mischief; but this fairy was undoubtedly dead—all its sportiveness at rest, all its vivacity ended. Never again would this goblin-creature doff his pert red cap, and, offering his lean hand to some small quaint being clad in gossamer, or perhaps in a snake's

"Enamell'd skin,
Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in,"

lead her to the dance on the mead, where the mushrooms spring up in the night as by magic, and where the cowslips nod in the sweet soft breeze and lend their fragrance to the mad zephyrs; never again would he climb the church steeple and ring the bells at midnight, causing the village folk to shiver with fear and

crouch beneath their coverlets; never again in the small hours would he play pranks in the cottage of a foe, or do kind errands in the homestead of a favoured friend; never again would he "hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear," or "put a girdle round about the earth in forty minutes," or "war with rear-mice for their leathern wings;" never again! He had had his life—a thousand years, perhaps, or perhaps many thousands—and now he lay there dead.

But who was he—this thing of perpetual quips and cranks—this tiny sprite who could make his bed within an acorn's cup and play hide-and-seek with a gamesome fellow in the bells of a fox-glove, who could conceal himself in a lady's thimble and hang upon her eye-lashes unperceived—and yet whose irresistible might and giant strength and crafty wiles could carry away a human child to Fairyland, and drive the kine from a cross neighbour's pasture, and shiver vast rocks at a blow, and delude wise men and alarm the desperado? And why did he die? and was he the first dead fairy? or did fairies often die? How was it?

Then my little son came running up, panting and rosy. What was I looking at? he asked.

I did not immediately tell him. I took his soft small hand in mine and led him away and told him of the exquisite secrets of Nature, and what was the difference between rain-drops and drops of dew, and what the sun had to do with the vapours, and why plants must be watered, and fifty other strange scientific facts, which are as interesting and lovely as the most enchanting fairy-tale that ever was written, and true into the bargain. Then we came back to the spot where the dead fairy lay, and I looked again, and again it seemed that I beheld that shrivelled human form, but diminutive as no human being was ever made, with the russet suit and the dull red cap and shoes, and the wee eerie face turned from me, so that I could not see the sharp pinched features and the glazed eyes. Hundreds of years that thing had lived and frolicked; scores of kings and princes and great men and warriors had he befooled; dozens of pretty maids had he led astray; shoals of silly gaping youths had he hoodwinked and outwitted; and yet he lay there now—dead. I sighed profoundly. It seems so natural that a Wellington, a Socrates, a Mahomet, a Napoleon, a Cœur de Lion, even a Shakespeare, should die: death is the heritage of man—his inevitable end—his incomparable doom. But that a fairy should die—a creature that could dance on and on without being weary, that could live without money or conscience, that left no seed to bless or curse its parent—that such an one should give up its ghost was miserable. I could not bear the thought, and I stooped and touched the fairy gently with my finger. It rolled over, and a ray of light fell upon it, and I saw that it was a leaf, withered and red, shrivelled up, helpless, dead—but only a leaf—not a fairy at all! It had never danced in

the fairy-ring, it had never joined hands with the fays of the vernal buds, it had never done a malicious deed or performed a neighbourly office, it had never wandered to the woods by moonlight or to the princess's pillow to make her start and cry out in her slumber; it had endured but for a season hanging to its twig, and then fallen to the ground and lain there rotting and reddening, wet with dew and rain—till my hand touched it.

"What is it, father?" asked the boy.

"Why, my child, though I am a strictly scientific person, I have let my fancy run away with me," said I. "Look at this decayed leaf! I have been meditating upon it for half-an-hour, believing it to be a dead fairy."

"That!" said my son disdainfully. "A nasty old leaf like *that*!"

"Yes. Wasn't it foolish?" said I. "Even if fairies existed, I might have known they never die."

"Don't they, though?" cried the child. "Die! Why, of course they die! Everybody dies."

"But they don't exist," said I.

The boy looked at me with supreme contempt.

"They exist and they die," he said dogmatically. "I know it, because I found a dead one in the violet bed and I buried him."

"You found a nasty old leaf like this," said I. "Fairies don't exist."

"My fairy was no old leaf," said he. "They do exist, or how could I have buried one?"

It was vain to argue. Like Wordsworth's heroine with her reiterated "We are seven," my son could only repeat, "There must be fairies, for I found a dead one and I buried him."

I asked feebly what he was like.

"Like a fairy," said the child solemnly.

"But how did you know it to be a fairy?" I urged.

He gravely nodded his head.

"I don't know how I knew, only I know I knew," he declared. "It *was* a fairy, and I buried him under the oak tree, and I put red-tipped daisies all over him, and a nightingale sang all the time, and I think he was very sorry. I don't know anything about your stupid old leaf, but I *know* mine was a fairy, and I buried him."

So I held my peace. What would Shakespeare have thought of my urchin? I wondered. Would he have laughed with delight and taken the child's hand and walked with him to the fairy's grave under the oak tree, and, standing there (as likely as not bareheaded) would he have woven a romance on the spot, and told his eager listener how Oberon had ordered that fairy to play another joke on Titania, bidding him fill her ears with a deceiving wax, so that when she should wake and hear the pigs grunting, she should sit rapt in ecstasy and crying out that that symphony

was beyond praise, that the violins were enchanting, and that the harmonious effect was indescribably beautiful; and how that fairy, having fallen in love with his royal mistress, refused to comply, and declared flatly that he would not be a party to fooling her majesty, and that it should not be through his means that the disgraceful comedy of Bottom should be re-enacted; and how Oberon, in a fury, bade Puck bind the disobedient elf hand and foot and chain him to a blade of grass; and how, after long captivity and many severe struggles, that forlorn sprite broke his bands and escaped, and after adventures many and wondrous, reached the haunt of Titania, where she was keeping court among the violets, and falling at her feet broke his heart and expired of love and passionate longing; and how Titania and her attendants, terrified at his cadaverous appearance and bewildered by his desperate and incoherent words, fled thence and left him lying dead—perhaps the first fairy that had ever died—possibly the only fairy that would ever die? Would Shakespeare have related a tale such as this, only finer and sweeter far, and not in halting words or in humble prose, but in delicate and dulcet rhyme or pure and tender blank verse, such as the world would rejoice to hear, such as all other poets would reverence, such as Fame would crystallize and Honour worship for ever and ever? Would he thus have immortalized that fairy's grave?

I could not tell. My boy scampered away, and I followed slowly, still holding in my hand that perished leaf—all that was left to me of my dead fairy. It had filled me with sweet thoughts and I held it respectfully. Its fairy form had gone and the red cap and shoes were no longer distinguishable. But it had been a fairy to me for half-an-hour and I regarded it tenderly, and when I reached the house I stooped, and, half ashamed, I scratched up a little mould in a stone basin where scarlet geraniums grew in summer and laid my dead fairy to rest.

As I stood upright again, my son came rushing up, demanding what I was about. I did not reply. I felt comically guilty, and I stood before my own offspring meekly, as if expecting castigation.

"You haven't been burying that *leaf*?" cried that quick and observant child. "Father, I believe you believe it *was* a fairy after all! How could you? It was nothing. *Nothing* but a rubbishy old leaf."

"How do you know that?" I asked a little petulantly.

"I don't know how I know, but I know that I *do* know," he replied.

"And suppose I had said that your fairy wasn't a fairy?" said I.

"You did," returned he coolly. "But you were wrong. My fairy *was* a fairy, and I buried him. Your fairy was only a faded leaf. It's a pity you didn't see mine and then you'd have known 't about it."

I said no more. One cannot convince those who have no doubts, and we all of us maintain that we know this or that, though we don't know how we know it. There are many people who never jump over the hedge to see how the view looks from the other side. To such, argument is futile. Like Galileo's adversaries, they know that their sun rises and sets.

As for me, I know mighty little—much less than my positive little lad. But this I do know, that my scarlet geraniums will be more beautiful next year, because of the dead fairy whom I buried at their roots.

OUR FRIENDS IN THE HUNTING FIELD.

By MRS. EDWARD KENNARD,

AUTHOR OF "THE GIRL IN THE BROWN HABIT," "KILLED IN THE OPEN,"
"A CRACK COUNTY," ETC., ETC., ETC.

PART III.

1.—THE MAN WHO GOES FIRST.

THE hunting field is a mimic world, on whose stage an immense number of different passions are represented. Pleasure, pain, envy, fear, malice, mortification, excitement and enthusiasm all play their part; sometimes one, sometimes the other preponderating, according to the nature and temperament of the individual. No deception is possible.

Every man, whatever his pretensions may be, soon finds his proper level, and is estimated strictly according to his merits. The coward is known as a coward, the impostor as an impostor. They cannot take in their friends and neighbours by any semblance of courage, or by any amount of bragging. Their foibles are pitilessly clear to the sharp eyes by which they are surrounded, and he who fancies himself a hero in the field is often spoken of with contumely and contempt. One thing is certain—folk are always more ready to pick holes than to praise. Human nature finds it much easier to censure than to laud.

But fond as people undoubtedly are of placing each other's weaknesses under a strong magnifying glass, and mercilessly dissecting them, there is one man who escapes the process, and for whose gallantry and manly courage they have nothing but unqualified admiration.

I speak of the man who goes first. The man who, whenever hounds run for ten minutes at a time, is sure to be seen close at their sterns, performing prodigies of valour and charging fences, oxers and bullfinches with a brave indifference that makes us feel he is somehow fashioned of stouter stuff than ourselves.

His comrades entertain a profound veneration for him. Some few of the younger generation try vainly to emulate his deeds. What quality do these youngsters lack, that so small a proportion can compete with him? Do they lose their heads? Do they want his experience, his coolness and nerve? Who knows?

Anyhow, no one who sees him in the hunting field can refrain from acknowledging that he is a dauntless and lion-hearted fellow, who, unlike the majority of the human race, does not appear to know the common sensation of physical fear. Do youth and a sound constitution confer this advantage? Not always; for sometimes he has left his best years behind him, and is the father of a large and annually increasing family.

When hounds run hard, nothing can stop him. With them he must and will be.

He has an eye like a hawk—bright, quick, keen, and no sooner does he land into a field than he immediately determines upon his point of exit, and rides straight for it, not deviating a hair's breadth to the right or to the left. This power of promptly making up his mind is invaluable, and makes slow horses appear fast, bad gallopers good. If he fails to perceive a gap, or weak place in the fence ahead, he goes the shortest way, and simply chances it, taking his risk of what may be on the other side. Crash! fly the timbers from a rotten oxer. Splash! rise the green waters of an unsuspected pond, into which his horse has jumped. What cares he?

With a flounder, a scramble, and a "Come, get up," he is once more careering over the springy pastures, urging his good steed to his speed, in order to make up for lost ground.

Fence after fence he throws behind him, reckless of consequences, never looking back unless it be when he has succeeded in clearing an extra wide ditch, to call out some warning word to his followers, bidding them put on the pace. Many of them are good men and hard, but they cannot touch their leader, who in every instance points out the way and is not to be headed.

It is a brave sight, when they reach some almost unjumpable place, to see the man who goes first, whilst others are hesitating and drawing rein, crash right into the very midst of it, regardless of danger, and a sorry one when, as is frequently the case, he and his horse roll head over heels in horrible confusion of arms, heels and legs. But even then he is undefeated. He rises from mother earth with a pale, smiling countenance and a muddy coat, and is up and away before any one has had the heart to follow his example.

"Not hurt, old fellow?" shout out the little band after his receding form, as they proceed to take advantage of the handy gap made.

His head is swimming, his eyes blinded by black specks, his neck so stiff he cannot turn it, but he calls back, "No; not a bit. Only a trifle shaken." So saying he crushes his battered hat well down over his mud-stained brow, and without more ado proceeds to charge some equally formidable obstacle.

The wonder is that he has a single whole bone left in his body, and yet strange to say, although he gets a very fair proportion of

falls he seldom meets with a bad one. The timorous old roadster crawling along the roads breaks his leg owing to his horse putting his foot into a drain. The habitual shirker smashes three ribs at a gap, where all he asks of his steed is to walk quietly through it. The man who goes first has escaped these and similar disasters. His courage protects him, and it really seems as if he possessed the power of communicating his own gallant spirit to the animals he bestrides. Anyhow, the dash and determination of the rider appear shared by his hunters. It is the rarest thing in the world to see one of them refuse with him. They probably know that they must go whether they like it or not, and so wisely make up their equine minds to the inevitable.

Our friend sells annually, and therefore commences the season with an entirely new lot. But that fact makes not the slightest difference to him. He very quickly ascertains what his summer purchases are worth, drafts those that are bad, and proceeds to put heart and "jumping powder" into the good. Early in May he sends his whole stud to the hammer, asserting that he is not rich enough to retain favourites. As a rule his horses are nothing particular to look at. They are mostly well bred, but lean as greyhounds, and bear sundry marks and blemishes. Nevertheless they fetch fabulous prices, and his sale is always one of the great events of the London season. People have seen his hunters going in the field, and are willing to open their purse-strings wider than their wont, in order to secure such extraordinary performers.

Need we say that they are frequently disappointed in the purchases made, and discover, when too late, that it is the man, and not the horse, who is extraordinary? They cannot buy his iron nerve, or his unconquerable spirit. If they could, no price would be too great to pay for them. They are divine gifts conferred but rarely, and often thrown away upon the possessor who has it in his power to be a leader of men, not merely of the hunting field.

A large proportion of the gentlemen and ladies who pursue the fox are very much given to drawing the long bow, and to enlarging on their own performances directly the dangers of the day are well over. Seated before a blazing fire, or with their legs comfortably stowed away under the mahogany, it is an exceedingly gratifying thing to say, "I did this and that. Did you see me?"

But the man who goes first is as remarkable for his modesty as for his courage. He never talks of what he has done, perhaps because he knows that there is no occasion for him to glorify his deeds by self-encomium. They are patent to all the world, and require not the laudation of Number One. To listen to him, you would think that every soul out hunting had seen the run better than himself. He never enters into a discussion as to where so-and-so was at a given period of the day's amusement, and if asked who broke down the big bit of timber which let in all the field, or who showed the way first, over that awkward, treacherous-banked

brook, invariably says he can't remember, though he knows quite well it was himself.

No one is so keen a sportsman, nor so good a fellow as the man who goes first. Although no doubt he is not exempt from those emulative feelings shared by most hard-riding men, he will always stop to pick up a fallen friend, and even lose his place of honour in order to catch and bring back that friend's riderless horse.

He does not speak much out hunting, being too intent on the proceedings of the hounds to indulge freely in the pastime, known as "coffee-housing." Nevertheless the ladies all unite in worshipping him, and are his most devoted admirers. They think more of a word from him than of an hour's conversation with an ordinary individual. For where is the woman, young or old, who does not prostrate herself before the shrine of courage, and who does not entertain a profound reverence for its possessor? So great is the enthusiasm excited by our friend in the female breast, that every now and again, some rash and infatuated young person will take it into her head to constitute him pilot. Woe be to that young person. Half a dozen fences soon prove the temerity of her resolution. In hunting parlance she is quickly "choked off," and gives up the attempt to follow so desperate a leader with a sigh, realizing the danger to which she exposes herself in endeavouring to do as he does. But he heeds not the fair sex. Sport is his bride and his passion. Next to hunting he places salmon fishing, and after salmon fishing, shooting. The chase of the "thief of the world" comes, however, a long way first in his estimation.

He is the Master's right-hand man, being indefatigable in getting up poultry, wire funds, &c. The huntsman treats him with peculiar respect, and nearly always accepts his opinion as to which way the hunted fox has gone. Indeed, few people get so near a view of Master Reynard.

A large number of the field repose such unlimited confidence in the man who goes first that they cannot even conceive of his being thrown out or taking a wrong turn. They follow his movements with sheepish obsequiousness, and are perfectly content to hunt *him*, without either hounds, fox, or huntsman. He has been known to lead a numerous contingent for three or four miles over a stiff line of country, just for the joke of the thing, knowing all the time that the pack had run to ground in an entirely opposite direction. When he pulled up and his astonished followers suddenly exclaimed, "Where are the hounds?" with a quiet smile of appreciation for their sportsman-like propensities he answered demurely :

"The hounds! Oh! they're at Grangecross, trying to bolt their fox from a drain. I thought you knew."

"Then, what the dickens did you mean by leading us this dance?"

"Dance, gentlemen! May I not be permitted to qualify my young horse for our county steeplechases?"

But even such a manœuvre as this cannot succeed in freeing him altogether from his train of blind admirers. They consider it more honour and glory to be in the same field with him than with the hounds. He is their fox, their sport, their everything. Such adulation is flattering, but it has its drawbacks. The truth is, the man who goes first is regarded as the hero of his particular Hunt, whether he like it or not. He cannot escape from the celebrity earned by his gallant and fearless conduct. Are we foolish to hold him in such esteem? to look up to a person because he jumps more and bigger fences than we do ourselves? The answer is, No.

Our friend may not be intellectual, he may be slow of wit, dull of conversation, feeble at repartee, but for all that he is fashioned of the stuff of which heroes are made. He would lead his men on some desperate charge were he a soldier, just as coolly as he rides at a double oxer; or if a sailor, die fighting at his guns as calmly and bravely as he bores the way through some apparently impenetrable bullfinch.

So long as our hunting fields continue to produce such men as these, no one can say that the sons of England have become effete. The gallant spirit is still there which has enabled them to win so much fame in the past, and will yet win them fame in the future.

For the man who goes first out hunting is no mere weakling, but a fine, determined fellow, full of manly qualities and vigorous vitality which any national emergency would call into life. One thing is certain. Wherever he may be, he will always gain the applause of his fellow men and exercise a powerful influence over them.

2.—THE VENERABLE DANDY.

DEAR old fellow! How often have we not smiled at, and laughed over his little foibles and vanities, and loved him at heart, much in the same way as we love Thackeray's immortal Major Pendennis. His artifices are so innocent, the small deceptions that he practises so thoroughly guileless and transparent that they fail to irritate as artifice and deceit generally do.

Seen from an appropriate distance, he may indeed recall Keats' celebrated line—"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever," but on nearer inspection, his exquisitely glossy, black wig, worn low on each side of the ears, proclaims itself unmistakably to be an artificial covering; whilst the carefully curled whiskers and moustache of which he is so proud, recall to our minds sundry advertisements that daily greet our eyes in the newspapers anent "Nuda Veritas," "Mexican Renewer," and so forth.

Granted that Art and not Nature has produced the captivating results centred in the person of our venerable Dandy, shall we admire him any the less on that account? No, certainly not.

Few people can deny that his jetty wig is a beautiful thing in its way, fashioned most cunningly and artistically. Those two little touches of rouge on either cheek-bone have a pleasing effect, although they are perfectly patent to the beholder. Black and red go well together, and the contrast between our old buck's complexion and his hair reminds us of some pretty, fresh country lass.

Nor can it be gainsaid that the two dazzling rows of false teeth which gleam so brilliantly from beneath his stiff, military moustache, are decidedly pleasanter to look at than one or two irregular yellow stumps, taking precarious hold, like mouldy tombstones in a deserted churchyard. Yes, when we look at our venerable friend, we can forgive all his little simple contrivances to appear young and boyish; for, at least they impose upon nobody but himself, and if they render his child-like spirit happy, so much the better. The weaknesses in which he indulges are mostly harmless. They neither hurt nor offend his neighbours, and the presumption is that they arise from an inordinate desire to please and to secure golden opinions.

Poor old Dandy! By all means keep up thy illusions, so long as they afford thee any satisfaction. Many of us in our hearts can even feel a certain sympathy for them, since the process of getting bald, and wrinkled, and aged, and seeing others pass us in life's race, is not agreeable to the majority. Few people like leaving their youth and good looks behind them, or seeing the pitiless years stamping themselves upon brow, and face, and form.

All women hate it, and most men, and so they try to remain juvenile as long as they can, and take first to one cosmetic, then to another, in the vain hope of putting off the evil day, or at least preventing their friends and neighbours from guessing that it has already arrived. And they flatter themselves they succeed, only they don't. Human beings are seldom lenient to each other's age, and have a pitilessly correct way of scoring up dates. Births, deaths, and marriages serve as excellent pegs for the memory.

When the venerable Dandy first rises of a morning, he has a bad quarter of an hour. What horrible tales does not the glass tell; what ghastly seams and furrows it reveals! From brow to chin he sees nothing but a mass of wrinkles that deepen day by day. But the mysteries of the toilet once gone through, and no man—not even the old gentleman's valet—is acquainted with their subtle entirety, he descends upon the world at large, a different creature, and airs himself in the sunshine, like a bird of gay, if borrowed plumage.

How erect he sits in his saddle, after the difficulty of getting there is once overcome, and he rides happily off to the meet,

conscious that he is well-dressed and looking his best. He struggles gallantly with his seventy summers, and fights Old Age inch by inch, retiring with a brave front, although worsted periodically in the combat. He draws in the small of his back and inflates his padded chest as he passes a couple of pretty young ladies seated in a smart pony-trap, drawn by a quick-stepping, hog-maned pony. They obtain a fine view of his lovely teeth, accompanied by an irresistible smile, as, bowing at the shrine of youth and beauty, he takes off his hat with an elaborate flourish. What a sheen there is on that same hat! All the "Mashers" of the hunt are dying to find out who his hatter is and where he dwells. Such secrets as these, however, our venerable friend never reveals. Time after time have they invited him to dinner and primed him with old port—his favourite beverage—but although he grows very chatty under its influence, he continually diverts the conversation when it reaches too personal or inquisitive a point. He keeps his own counsel and makes no confidences on such important matters.

The whole county covet his receipt for boot varnish. It is both their envy and their admiration. But although numerous attempts have been made to induce him to part with the information, not a single one has ever succeeded. Rumour says that he himself concocts the precious fluid and will not even allow his valet to witness the operation, for fear of being betrayed. However that may be, no one else's boots are so well turned out as his, or possess so smooth a polish or such delicately rose-tinted tops. Added to this, the flexibility, softness and spotless purity of his leathers drive all the gentlemen's gentlemen to despair. Labour as they will, they cannot produce the same results. Their lemon juice, their various acids, their pipeclay and breeches powder are just so much waste of money.

Whether they like it or not, the younger generation are forced to admit that the venerable Dandy is the best-dressed man in the whole hunting field. His ties are irreproachable, his pins miracles of neatness and sporting art, his coats fit without a crease, his waistcoats are quite unique, and as for his buttonholes they are simply perfection. But as he is beautiful, so he is prudent. Our dear and respected friend never sallies forth to the chase without a large white mackintosh carefully rolled up and strapped to his saddle.

There are some things about him which fairly pass the comprehension of his fellow sportsmen. For instance, not a soul out hunting can conceive how, when every one else is splashed with mud from top to toe, he manages to appear at the very end of the day with scarcely a stain! If they have occasion to gallop down a road at full speed, receiving many a shower bath in the process, there he is cool, neat and smiling.

Other people's horses bespatter them with dirt, he never seems to receive a clod. Their eyes get bunged up with the gritty

compound thrown from the heels of the animal in front, his apparently never do. In fine weather his appearance completely defies change. Hat, gloves, breeches, boots, wig, whiskers, and complexion are all as carefully preserved when hounds go home to their kennels as when they met. How he manages it is a problem which has puzzled even the very wisest heads of the Hunt, and one which they are totally unable to solve.

Needless to say, the venerable Dandy never jumps. A fence might interfere sadly with his "make up," and the risk of discovery is too great. Fancy his feelings, if his lovely wig were to be caught in the thorny embrace of some ugly bullfinch, and left behind. Ugh! the very thought sends a cold shudder down his spine. If such a thing as that were to happen really, then the sooner death came the better. He could never survive his shame. But our friend wisely avoids the chance of this or any similar catastrophe. He puts discretion before valour, and contents himself with a line of gates, or if they happen to fail, he sticks perseveringly to the roads.

Here he finds plenty of company, people, in fact, of excellent pretensions, booted and spurred, and clad in pink. But sometimes these gentlemen are in too much of a hurry for him. They have no objection to tearing along the hard macadam, being valiant enough when those horrid dangerous fences are removed from vision. Dandy, however, has long ago discovered that a quiet and sedate trot suits his stays and his teeth better than a more violent pace. Galloping shakes him and disarrays his person. Consequently, he not unfrequently finds himself in the society of the second horsemen, who pilot him cunningly about. His manners are very condescending and affable. He knows how to converse with those occupying a lower grade, at the same time maintaining his dignity. No one ever takes liberties with him, for whatever his faults may be, he is a thorough gentleman. Even his foibles are those of his class.

His great delight is to get hold of some nervous young lady—especially if she is nice looking—who protests she hates the very sight of a fence. How prettily and tenderly he soothes her fears, with what a manly courage tries to point out that they are unfounded, and how kindly he insists on her taking a sip from his flask, amorously applying his own lips after those of the fair. The dear old fellow is never so happy as when buzzing about the ladies and overwhelming them with delicate attentions. He has a courtly grace, an old-fashioned, chivalrous manner towards the sex, which they appreciate, and which they deplore as being out of date now-a-days. He hovers round a pretty woman, much as a blue-bottle hovers round a jam pot, and gets on quite confidential terms before some envious but rough-mannered youth has even received a nod. The young fellows affect to despise him and some of them treat him with scant courtesy, but nevertheless they are a little bit jealous

of his social successes, and wonder "How the devil the women can put up with that old fool." Perhaps, after all, the latter are the best judges of those subtle qualities that go to make up a gentleman, and the majority show a decided partiality for the venerable Dandy.

If he only says "a fine morning" or "a cold one," they will always smile back at him in return, and make some playful remark agreeable to the old fellow's vanity.

Thoroughly happy is he on a bright, sunshiny day. Then, like a butterfly, he spreads his wings, and the spirit within him soars on high. Fine overhead, dry under foot, he asks for nothing more, and flits about, showering his little polite speeches on all those with whom he comes in contact. It does not take much to content him. He is an easily satisfied, guileless creature, who still retains a large capacity of enjoyment, which advancing years cannot suppress altogether.

The spiteful say of him that he never by any chance has an original idea. Well! how many people are there who have, except in the deceptive recesses of their own imagination? What they mistake for originality is generally only repetition. An idea is almost as scarce as a nugget of gold, but luckily most people get on fairly well without possessing any very large stock on which to draw.

Dandy passes muster with the crowd, and is a pleasant-spoken, harmless, good-natured old beau, who desires nothing better in this world than to live and let live. His philosophy may not be profound, but it is of a very useful, work-a-day description.

What if the men do laugh at him now and again, and he is unpleasantly conscious of the fact. He has the consolation of knowing that their wives and sisters always take his part, and stick up for him in his absence. They realize that in spite of sundry little conceits and affectations, he possesses a simple, kindly nature, whose very craving for admiration is childlike and innocent.

They may see, but forgive his faults, and even while they smile at, love the venerable Dandy, who is so ready to pay them compliments, and as far as lies in his power to render himself agreeable.

Such is the brilliant side of the picture. Alas! that there should be another.

Why will the winds blow, and the rain descend to stamp as fraudulent an amiable old gentleman's harmless attempts to improve upon Nature? Nature is not always kind, and often requires assistance, which, however, she not unfrequently resents.

If the morning be very wet, Dandy consults his barometer, and does not attempt to face the elements. He cannot enjoy fox hunting in bad weather, and therefore wisely makes up his mind to stop at home. But our climate is variable, and there are many days in winter when it is impossible to tell whether it will rain

or not, and when even the meteorological report in the newspaper is thoroughly misleading and calculated to convey a wrong impression.

Those are miserable and unfortunate days for our Dandy.

He is thoroughly wretched once the deluge commences. True, his big white mackintosh almost entirely protects his frame, but as the wet raindrops chase each other down his cold face, he has a horrible conviction that his finely pencilled eyebrows, his carefully rouged cheeks, his cleverly dyed whiskers are fading away, washed into parti-coloured smudges, and leaving exposed to vision grey hairs, yellow crow's-feet and unsightly wrinkles. His first act on reaching home is to look in the looking-glass, and there he sees his worst fears confirmed. Twenty years are added to his age since he started at morn. His cheeks are grimed with black, owing to the inky rivulets that have trickled from eyebrows and whiskers, his collar is stained the same sable hue, and the hair of his wig hangs down in lanky wisps, through which any one can detect the silvery foundation on which it reposes.

Alack! alack! these are cruel and disastrous days, which make him vow he will give up hunting altogether, and endeavour to resign himself to growing old with a good grace.

But he will never grow old really. He is a boy at heart, and always will remain so, whilst the instinct which makes him seek to conceal the ravages of Time is too strong to be conquered.

He fights a desperate battle with advancing years, and when at length he feels his days are numbered, remains true to the characteristics which have distinguished him through life. He calls the wife of his bosom to his side, and with feeble voice and flickering smile says—"Wife, put it in all the newspapers, and—
and—be tender as to my age."

Poor old Dandy!

Why should not we be tender to him also, and dwell rather on his simplicity, his inoffensiveness and unvarying good nature, than on his little vanities and conceits?

If it pleased him to fancy that, because he padded his coats, swelled out his chest, dyed his whiskers, wore a wig, and rouged his yellow cheeks, it made him appear gay and juvenile, why should not we fall in with his mood and favour the delusion?

Alone, in the sanctity of his own chamber, depend upon it he has had many a bad moment, when the words of the Preacher were sufficient chastisement for any eccentricities in which he chose to indulge.

If we had not a little folly amongst us, something to laugh at, and something to cry at, what an insufferable world this would be—a world of Pharisees and Prigs.

3.—THE FARMER.

NOT one in twenty of those who follow the fox take into sufficient consideration the enormous debt of gratitude which they owe to the farmer. The majority of people seem to think that when they ride over his wheat, force open his gates and break down his fences, they have a perfect right to do so, and the proprietor has no business whatever to complain.

Now, this is not only a very unsportsmanlike, but also a very erroneous view of the case.

It cannot be too emphatically stated that without the consent and co-operation of the farmers, hunting could not exist for even a single day. They have the power to strike its death-knell at any moment, and it is solely owing to their goodwill and courtesy that the Chase continues to flourish. Folks should bear this fact in mind, and abstain as much as possible from inflicting unnecessary damage.

If all were to combine, a great deal might be done, especially as heedlessness is generally at the bottom of the mischief. In the ardour of a good run the hard-riding gentry, and even those who are not particularly keen about being with the hounds, will continually let young stock escape from their field, little thinking how much time and trouble it takes to drive them back again; and few sportsmen hesitate to gallop over growing crops, in spite of the master's remonstrances.

These things should not be. They are opposed to fair play, common sense, and above all, to self-interest. In return for what the farmer has to put up with, every one should study his wishes, even at the expense of losing his or her place, which, after all, is not a very serious misfortune.

A certain proportion of farmers, luckily for them, possess independent means, and in spite of bad times and the prevailing agricultural depression, are able to keep a horse or two and hunt pretty regularly. They enjoy the sport as much, if not more than most people, and when hounds travel over their land are always the first to show the way across it, or to lift gates from hinges with a magnanimous disregard for consequences. No better fellow lives, and he is the life and soul of fox-hunting.

Even if every fence on his property were broken down, he would scorn to utter a complaint to the authorities. He is a thorough sportsman, keen as mustard. Although his poultry dwindle, his lambs disappear, and he suffers in a variety of different ways, he never says a word; and in the covert close by his house there is always a litter of foxes to be found.

He, and others like him are a pillar of strength to the Hunt. All through the summer he walks a goodly number of puppies, and keeps them entirely at his own expense. The cups which from time to time he has won with them are treasured as family

heirlooms, and shine on the oak mantelpiece of his best parlour. In the field no one is more popular or more respected. It is a pleasure to see his bright rosy countenance, on which health and good humour are legibly written. The fair sex find in him a staunch champion; for he possesses a spirit of chivalry fast dying out among the gentlemen of the nineteenth century. It is his honest voice that invariably shouts, "Make way for the lady," and if by any chance he sees her unfairly deprived of her turn at a fence, his anger breaks loose immediately and vents itself in an indignant "Shame!" which earns him many a smile of gratitude.

In short, he is the pink of courtesy, and there are noble lords whose manners are not equal to his. And when hounds run, how well he goes, how straight he rides, even although his horses are often a trifle under-bred and over-paced. But he makes up for these deficiencies by a thorough knowledge of the country and by never being afraid to go the shortest way.

Every fence within a radius of several miles is familiar to him, and he can lead you in a bee line down to the only place where the brook is fordable, or the unjumpable bottom practicable.

Now and again he picks up a young horse cheap, and makes him; riding him in dauntless fashion, regardless of tumbles, till he knows his business thoroughly. He is a capital man to buy from, as his animals have been well ridden, and he is content to take a smaller profit than a dealer. But as a rule the dealer knows every farmer in the county who purchases or breeds young horses; and the opportunities of acquiring a decent hunter without the intervention of a third party are daily becoming scarcer as the demand increases.

The hard-riding farmer is so familiar to us all that to dwell further on his merits appears superfluous. Every time we go out hunting we can witness them and admire them.

But there is another class of farmer who also contributes greatly to the sport and whose virtues are liable to be overlooked, from the mere fact of their belonging to a passive rather than to an active order. We allude to those who don't hunt, and who care nothing for the chase. These men are sometimes abused, and in nearly every instance most undeservedly. We are as much indebted to them as to their fox-loving brethren, indeed rather more so; for the latter get considerable compensation for the depreciation of their property, in the shape of amusement, whilst the former derive no satisfaction whatever from allowing their fields to be scampered over by two or three hundred thoughtless and careless people, who do not take even ordinary precautions to avoid inflicting damage on the owner.

Is it any wonder if they grumble a little at times? If we were in their place should not we grumble also, and resent the oft-recurring intrusion as a nuisance and a personal insult?

They have no sporting tastes, and only ask to be left alone—to

live and let live; and in their hearts would rejoice if hunting were done away with altogether. They look upon it as an oppression of the poor by the rich, an ostentatious display of wealth, unwise and unseemly in the depressed condition of the country. They are all for liberty and equality, and think every man should be king of his own domain. Some years ago, when times were good, they neither liked nor disliked hunting. Their feelings were neutral and their pockets were not perceptibly affected one way or the other. At least, they bore the strain better. But in these days, ideas have undergone a revolution. The prospects of farming are so bad that every sixpence has become of consequence, and that lean, fleshless maiden, Economy, turns much otherwise healthy blood to gall. It is easy enough to be good-natured as long as you have plenty of money. Nothing renders a man so surly as the lack of it. Landlords complain of the quantity of wire now used by tenants on their farms. They forget that wire is about the cheapest form of fencing procurable. If they don't like it, why don't they furnish timber to put up rails in its place? Strange that the idea does not seem to strike them! It is unreasonable to expect a man who does not hunt himself, and whose proclivities are inclined not to the Chase, not to consult his own interest in the important matter of pounds, shillings and pence. Why should the farmer who never gets on to a horse from one year to another, pay for people to come galloping over his land? If they needs must gallop over it let them make good any damage inflicted. Nothing can be simpler.

This is fair enough, and yet how seldom do we hear the non-sporting farmer's side of the question discussed in an open, equitable manner. If he makes the smallest remonstrance he is generally dubbed "a cross-grained old brute." As often as not he is a very hardly-used individual, naturally somewhat aggrieved at finding his property little respected, and himself treated as a perfect nonentity. A few considerate words, a judicious payment now and again, when the Hunt is manifestly in the wrong, and above all, some acknowledgment from its more influential members, would go far to allay the feeling of soreness often engendered. Gentlemen are very foolish who fail to conciliate the farmers, for they are their best friends, and to convert them into enemies is a terrible mistake. The wonder is, not that an occasional farmer now and again should warn people off his land, but that the whole body do not join in a hue and cry against hunting.

They are a long-suffering race, and in these days have many difficulties to contend with. Therefore those who follow the fox, should never lose an opportunity of proving their gratitude for the generosity which alone permits them to pursue their favourite pastime.

When a gate has been shivered to pieces, a fence badly broken down, they should not wait for a formal complaint to be lodged, but should club together among themselves to repair the loss as speedily as possible. Such actions, if done spontaneously, would

go a long way towards maintaining amicable relations. The meanness of the rich is answerable for a good deal of the existing discontent. The British farmer is a splendid fellow, taking him all round, and his growl is frequently worse than his bite. Let courtesy be met with courtesy, instead of, as it often is, by rudeness and indifference. Let generosity on the one side call forth generosity on the other, and above all let the policy of field and master be one of conciliation towards the class of men who thoroughly deserve to be treated with kindness and consideration in return for their sacrifices made on behalf of fox-hunting. A soft answer turneth away wrath, and an angry man armed with a pitchfork is more easily disarmed by pleasant speech and a disposition to listen to his grievances, than by a volley of indignant oaths, whose only result is that both parties lose their temper and come to an open breach, certainly to the disadvantage of Nimrod.

We should remember that the land is not ours to do what we like with, and that a stout, elderly farmer having a dozen young children all tearing at his purse-strings, cannot be expected to look upon fox-hunting with the same enthusiasm as a rich young man who has plenty of money to spend, and nobody to spend it on but himself.

Different circumstances give rise to very different notions, and poverty quickly slackens zeal. When you begin to say to yourself, "It will cost me half-a-crown to have that gap made up," and the same half-crown is wanted to pay for a dozen various things, the question comes quite naturally, "Why should I allow that gap to be made? Nobody even says, Thank you, for the pains I am put to." Farmers, as a body, will not stop fox-hunting as long as they can afford to support it, and matters are conducted in a fair and gentlemanly way. And if times change, if the people assume the upper hand and take to market gardening, instead of caring to risk their necks over blind fences, it will be unfair to lay the blame at the farmer's door. Only when that day comes, England may take a back seat among the nations.

Her children will miss the nursery ground in which their finest qualities, "pluck," dash, and gallantry have been fostered, and sink to the level of the soft, effeminate foreigner, who regards *le sport* as a species of madness.

Meanwhile, let us thank the farmers for the good times they have given us in the past, and still hope that by friendliness and conciliation on either side, those good times may continue in the future. What a terrible revolution would be worked in English country life if each county could not produce its pack of hounds. Think of the boredom of the men, the regrets of the women. Accidents there must always be, but fox-hunting compensates for them all by the health, the exhilaration, and cordial good-fellowship that it brings. So, three cheers for our best friend, the farmer.

(To be continued.)

SHENSTONE.

By MRS. HOUSTOUN,

AUTHOR OF "RECOMMENDED TO MERCY," ETC.

INTRODUCTION.

SOME months ago there chanced to fall into my hands a large collection of original letters, the principal portion of which were written by the poet Shenstone from the Leasowes, which place was, as all the world knows, the property and favourite residence of the poet in question. It was with a feeling approaching to awe that I examined one by one the letters written on thin paper, yellow with age, and rendered quaint in appearance by the Old English capitals of more than a century ago, which the owner of the Leasowes, together with his numerous correspondents, employed in the commencement of their trite and somewhat old-world sentences. A considerable number of these letters were addressed to Lord Lyttelton, Shenstone's near neighbour, and between whom and the latter there existed, if we may credit the testimony of Dr. Johnson, a certain amount of jealousy as regarded the respective beauties and attractions of their several homes. That this should have been the case seems difficult of belief, the local advantages of Hagley and those possessed by the Leasowes being on too widely different a scale for comparison between the two to have been possible. The pride taken by Shenstone in the gardens and pleasure grounds, which were his own creation, is quite easy of comprehension, and throughout his letters it is easy to trace the amount of egotistical and almost childish satisfaction that he took in their adornment. By those adornments the place which as a mere farmhouse property he had inherited was, through his skill and taste, made to "blossom as a rose."

Singular to relate, I have never been able to trace in what manner and through whose agency the letters in question became my father's property, and eventually fell into his grandson's hands. There is however some reason to imagine that the fact of my grandfather being the rector of a Staffordshire living within easy distance of the Leasowes, was not without its influence in the matter. Bishop Horne, author of the "Commentaries on the Psalms," was at one time my grandfather's curate, and I think I am justified in supposing that an intimacy between him and the poet may have existed at some period of their lives, and that my temporary possession of the

correspondence may be thus accounted for. In Shenstone's letters, which were put into my hands for publication, I found little of general interest. Occasionally there was in them the mention of a cotemporaneous writer, as for instance Richardson, of whose "New book, Sir Charles Grandison," Shenstone writes as "appearing in monthly numbers," but on the whole I did not feel greatly surprised by the refusal of an experienced London publisher to undertake the bringing out of the MSS. correspondence. The vein of egotism to which I have before alluded, and which would seem to have prompted much of Shenstone's poetry, is I think also plainly traceable in the extract from the letters, headed "The Tobacco Stopper Plot," which I now offer to the reader. The frolics of elderly men who were as wise in their generation as the Reverend Thomas Percy, Bishop of Dromore, and of William Shenstone the poet of the Leasowes, can hardly, I think, fail to raise a smile on the lips of those who read them; there is however to my mind so total an absence of merciful feeling towards the victim of their sport, that sympathy with that unfortunate individual is, I imagine, the prevailing feeling which the reading of the plot is calculated to call forth.

THE TOBACCO STOPPER PLOT.

Extract from a Letter of W. Shenstone's to Mr. Percy, dated The Leasowes, June 6th, 1759.

* * * * "Y^e 'Bacco-stopper* you gave * * * has been the occasion of a plot, at the Dénouement of which, it will be worth y^r while to be at the Leasowes. Suffice it that I accompany'd y^r favor† with a forg'd letter from Mr. Moody, mentioning y^r *deposition* of one Mr. Fitzdoltrel, cabinet-maker (of whom the said Moody is feign'd to buy the stopper) before the Mayor of Stratford in regard to its *authenticity*, offering to join Mr. * * * in the purchase of the *whole* tree. Mr. * * * 's reply (intercepted) desires only a *part* of the tree to make a *Cup*; whereon he purposes something carv'd in Basso Relievo. Moody is made to answer, y^t he has purchas'd the tree, and sends him one large *Arm* thereof, wrapped up in brown paper. Moreover (according to the natural propensity of tradesmen) gets him the Cup *made* and *carv'd*. In one compartment, Fitzdoltrel making oath before the Mayor of Stratford—In another, Shakespeare with a gardiner's

* *Norm* by Mr. Percy, afterwards Bishop of Dromore and author of "Percy's Reliques."—Mr. Moody, who kept the great Toy-shop at Birmingham, had to sell a parcell of Tobacco Stoppers, the top of which consisted of a head of Shakespeare indifferently cut, made of mulberry wood from a tree pretended to have been planted by Shakespeare. I bought one for a shilling and sent it to Mr. * * *, who collected curiosities.

† The Tobacco Stopper had been left at Mr. Shenstone's, in order to be convey'd to Mr. * * *.—*Notes by Mr. Percy.*

apron, planting the very tree; and Moody in the *middle*, shewing it to Mr. * * * on the right. The Cup is now in my Bureau with y^e Figures well-enough executed. Moody also is made to tell of a man at Nottingham y^e has a large collection *in His way*; which he thinks he would be glad to part with, having a family of 10 children, to whom the money would do more good. Moody is then desired to procure *the List*: and *here* you must assist me. I have gott for him the Spoon which Old Parr eat Buttermilk: and am promised a *real* King William's bib, for Mr. * * * to wear on the day of his Patron Saint. But with regard to these things at present lay y^r finger on y^r upper lip."

Extract from a Letter of the Rev. Mr. Percy to W. Shenstone, dated from Easton Manduit, August 3rd, 1759.

* * * "I wish Mr. — is not offended at me for being the innocent cause of one of the most diverting plots I ever knew in my life. It is now three months since I wrote to him and sent him Mr. Lye's book, directed to Mr. Aris's, neither of which he has informed me he has never rec^d. I wish I could be satisfied ab^t them: I am accountable to Mr. Lye for his book should it miscarry.

"And now, Sir, let me inquire after the sequel to y^r Plot: is it yet unravell'd? Have you filled up your Catalogue from Nottingham? I will not fail to contribute all I can towards it: at present I have got an old Dutch counter of Brass, which by the greenness of its rust and other venerable Insignia, may well pass for the coin of one of the Ptolomies, or some King of Syria:—N.B.—It is sufficiently illegible to be deemed Arabick.

"I have got a curious old snuff-box, made out of a sea-snail-house, that may pass for one of the first of the kind applied to this use. The shell is of that species described by the *Conchylogists* in the following significant terms, *cochlea univalvis, ore rotundo, umbilicated, clavicula depressa, superficie striata, laciniata, caniculata tuberosa, os argentum dicta*.—Having fortunately received a great hole on the side; this curious *univalve, umbilicated, claviculated, striated, laciniated, caniculated, tuberosa* shell; (which is of the fifth *lunar* Tribe) was rescued from the sordid company of the Nutmeg-grater and Thimble in an old Woman's Pocket: and exalted to the dignity of filling a compartment in a virtuoso's cabinet.

"I have also got a curious Lion of the ancient red Potter's ware; the same that the urns were formerly made of; see Sir Thomas Brown's *Hydrist phia*: It evidently appears to be of the same substance with the Norfoleian urns, described by that curious philosopher, and probably was buried along with them when cremation was in use. But whether a representative of the *Nemean Lion*: or symbolically expressive of something more.

occult : must be left to the curious : to whom it will not be the less valuable, because (like the old woman in Voltaire's *Candide* [which you have doubtless seen]) it has lost half its back side.

"These with whatever curious additions I can make to them are at your service; in the meanwhile send me a copy of the List you have composed for the benefit of your friend.

"To whom my compliments,

"Those of my wife attend yourself, I am,

"Dear Sir,

"Your very faithful
and obliged servant,

"THOS. PERCY."

Extract from a Letter of W. Shenstone, Esq. to the Rev. Thomas Percy, dated from The Leasowes, Oct. 3rd, 1759.

"The Plott is not unravelled that concerns * * *—The L^{dy} who acted as my Amanuensis, is but just returned from Bath. Pixell gave me your enclosed List, which however is too ludicrous for any one to swallow—your coin and your Nemean Lion will be wonderfully to my purpose; as likewise your shell, y^r definition of which made Dodsley and me laugh abundantly."

Extract from the same to the same, Nov. 23rd, 1759.

"Mr. * * * is impatient for his *curiosities*; tho' he is at this time sitting for his picture, wh. you will say, perdie, is *None*. He *shall* not be offended at the Receipt of aught you send him. I swear by the Ventle-trap itself—by the Ichyodontes Cuspidatus—Nay even by King William's Bibb; and by the Porringer of Old Parr."

From the same to the same, Jan. 6th, 1769.

"Could not Mr. P. procure Mr. * * * one of those locks of Amazonian hair by wh. the Amazons are reported to have suckled children behind their shoulders?"

From Mr. Percy to Mr. Shenstone, March 12th, 1769.

* * * "I have sent you some Catalogues of Curiosities; they are in consequence of the hint you threw out about the Amazon's hair: you have possibly forgot it, but I treasure up the least hint that drops from y^r pen. You are welcome to make what use of these Catalogue, you please, *provided* you do not expose me to Mr. * * * anger: For which reason I would wish they would rather come in the name of Mr. Moody or Mr. Fitzdoltrel than mine."

*A Copy of the first Letter received from Mr. * * * * relating to the Tobacco Stopper Plot, June or July, 1760.*

"SIR,

"It ever was a rule with me to think favourably of every man before I knew what his merits were; permit me to say that I thought myself honoured and happy in the correspondence of Mr. Percy, and I am sorry to find myself mistaken. To come to the purport of my letter, some little business called me last April into Warwickshire and accidentally I made some discoveries at Birmingham and Stratford-upon-Avon relative to an affair you was concerned in with my neighbour Mr. Shenstone against me, and I do not doubt but that the *Learned Arcadian* might influence your conduct therein, and no doubt it was fine sport to laugh at the Virtuosos, and to heighten your Entertainment might be the motive for signalizing me as instance very fit for the purpose of *Cullibility* (as Swift says). It is, no doubt, laudible to laugh people out of their follies, but it is by no means so to lead them into greater, especially where they must rely upon relation given of the truth or falsehood of facts, and where the credulity of the one must be much less culpable than the imposition of the other is venial: But as you never heard me form a wish to possess "The pin "That touched the Ruff that touched Queen Bess's chin," you should have been a little more cautious, and known more of my taste than to join any one in an imposition of the kind that you were concerned in with Mr. Shenstone against me. I never acted contrary to truth and sincerity with either of you, and your acquaintance with us both was sufficient to allot me as great a share of your respect as him. I utterly despise and ever did the fribblish taste for Nick-nacks and Trifles, and the whole pursuit of my studies (confined as they have been) have been directed to the acquisition of truth and useful knowledge. Mr. Shenstone's fertile brain is as capable of turning the laugh agst you as agst me, and I would dread to be the fool of a wit, as much as I should to turn the jest upon a room full of gentlemen who might some of them call one to very serious account for the mal-à-propos merriment they had been treated with. Not to trouble you any further, I will conclude with desiring a full explanation of this affair; I do demand it as a point of justice both to myself as well as whoever else was concerned in it, and as such I remain fully desirous of remaining,

"Sir,

* "Y^r most obedient hum^{le} servant,

" * * * * "

* The name is suppressed out of regard to the writer.

*Extracts from the second Letter of Mr. * * * relating to the Tobacco Stopper Plot.*

“SIR,

“I am very glad you appear not chargeable with the imposition practised by Mr. Shenstone and others against me. I am also as sorry that I have done you the injury to charge you with being a confederate therein, and that I should so warmly resent it. I very sincerely beg your pardon, and will make any acknowledgement that you may think necessary for your justification. I hope you will entertain no unfavourable opinion of me, when circumstances made so strongly ag^t you. To relate all the circumstances of the Breach in Friendship between Mr. Shenstone and myself, would set this affair in a clearer light, but as it will take up too much of your time, I shall confine my narrative to the Tobacco Stopper and mention other occurrences only as they may serve to indicate my conduct. Mr. Shenstone’s talent for Ridicule is so prevalent, that he would sacrifice every consideration to indulge that Foible.

“But to recur to my complaint. The note you sent along with the Tobacco Stopper was dated, “*Birm., Jan. 26th, 1759.*”—Moody’s pretended letter was dated “*Birm. 27 Jan. 1759,*” and came a few days after it, and it was not until April last that I discovered I had been imposed upon by Mr. Shenstone, and as I then thought by you also. Could I think otherwise after Moody’s assertion, that he did not receive any request from you to write to me, neither did he ever write to me? Might not the proximity in the dates of the two letters justify my suspicions, and my enquiry at Stratford-upon-Avon (in quest of the imaginary Mr. Fitzdoltrel) sufficiently confirm the same? As to the parcel of pretended curiosities, which you sent me afterwards, it was so barefaced a joke, that I must have been very ignorant to have swallowed it, or very splenetic to have resented what carried its own confutation along with it; accordingly I joked again by calling your Utopian coin a Chinese talisman. I was not at all offended at it—Tho’ it served to confirm me in your having been an instrument of imposing upon me in the other affair. I have been ridiculed from Birm. to Worcester and from Lapall to London, and never found till lately that the head of the poisoned stream arose so near my own dwelling. I never had the cup you mention sent me, but I heard that there was a design of sending me a large arm of a tree, as a pretended part of Shakespeare’s famous Mulberry Tree, but it failed, for want of the means how to convey it properly. Could I see you here (which indeed would afford me great pleasure), I could make you sensible of particulars, in a better manner than I can by letter. I will allow that every man has his *Hobby-Horse*—but I did not ride mine to *Death*, *i.e.*—I never laid any great stress upon medals or fossils, and much less upon nick-nacks. I never piqued myself upon my

Genius, Taste, or Learning, therefore hoped I might pass unnoticed, at least, if not meriting praise, I might escape Ridicule !

“ As I now have given you the most satisfactory acc^t I am able, of the cause of my accusation, and am very well satisfied of your innocence, *I hope* you will for that reason forgive me and believe that the same heart which was heated by resentment, now glows with as warm an opinion of the Veracity and Honour of Mr. Percy as usual, and that the continuance of our acquaintance, may convince him, that I am very cordially,

“ His sincere and affec^{te}

“ Hum^{le} servant,

* * * * 14th Aug.,

“ 1760.”

Extract from a Letter from the Rev. Thomas Percy to W. Shenstone, Esq., Easton Manduit, July 29th, 1760.

* * * “ I should be glad to know in what situation you are with regard to Mr. * * *. About a fortnight ago I received a very angry letter from him, requiring an explanation of the cheat put upon him last year, and which a journey to Birmingham and Stratford, he told me, had enabled him to find out. I answered his letter in such a manner, as will leave it in his own power to consider me hereafter in the number of his friends or not, as he pleases ; I cleared up my own share in the adventure, without giving him any insight into the rest, which as I was wholly innocent I could easily do ; I gave him advice, which is good if he will but take it, viz., to consider the story a pleasant jest and to be the first to join in the laugh about it. How far he is disposed to comply with my advice, as also what is the conclusion of the History, I shall be glad to hear from you. He is a very good-natured, obliging man, and I should be sorry to have him rendered unhappy.”

Extract from a Letter of W. Shenstone, Esq., to the Rev. Thomas Percy, dated from the Leasowes, August 11th, 1760.

* * * * “ Were I to say all y^t occurs in regard to Master * * *, it would engross my whole sheet of paper, which I do not intend it shall. He has indeed, for some *time* held but a low place in my esteem : What quarrel we have at present, is altogether of his *own* contrivance : For I by no means wished to *break* with him ; on account of the *amusement* which our connexions afforded each of us, and of which he will hardly say that he had *less* than an equal share. The discovery regarding Moody and the Mulberry Tree, was posterior to our fray, and employed by him as an *after-thought* to account for much preceding impertinence. The advice you gave him was obviously right ; but *thrown away* on one who

cannot distinguish between solid censure and harmless raillery. On the whole, he has of late display'd so much of the *forward child* and the *officious gossip*, that we shall scarce be again upon civil terms till he have made concessions which he may not approve. I ought to have told you of our Fray before, that the letter he wrote might not surprise you. I have never yet sent him your *Catalogue of Rarities* ; nor a parcell of *Curiosities* from your Friend, Miss Hickman. But a Friend of mine has thro' my hands, presented him with upwards of 300 Medals, which, as I am just beginning to make a collection I almost wish I had secur'd for myself."

POSTSCRIPT FOR THE READER.

The perusal of this final missive will, I am of opinion, convey to the reader a tolerably just idea of the character of Shenstone, such as I, after running through his letters, adjudge it to have been. He was a fluent poet, but all too apt to imagine that the trifles which interested *him* were of importance to the world in general. For instance, such well-known lines as the following :—

" *My* banks they are furnish'd with bees,
Whose murmur invites one to sleep ;
My grottoes are shaded with trees,
And *my* hills are white over with sheep.
I seldom have met with a loss,
Such health do my fountains bestow ;
My fountains all border'd with moss,
Where the hare-bells and violets grow,"

are in my opinion, confirmation strong of the fact that with William Shenstone the *Ego* was ever the first and all-important figure in his mind's eye.

This impression being given, the respect that one feels for the man scarcely keeps pace with the admiration which the gifts of the poet may have engendered in the minds of those by whom "The Village Schoolmistress" has been read and appreciated.

POGGLE'S MISTAKE.

By J. MORAY BROWN,

AUTHOR OF "SHIKAR SKETCHES," "POWDER, SPUR AND SPEAR," AND JOINT AUTHOR OF
"VIOLET VYVIAN, M.P.H."

"YES, I will. Hang me if I don't," said Mr. Poggie, laying down his book and filling himself another B. and S. Having cooled his throat with that seductive beverage and lit an enormous meerschaum, he proceeded thus with his soliloquy:—"If other fellows can do it, why shouldn't I? I can knock over a cock pheasant or a hare as well as most chaps, and as to coolness—bah! Well, I always was reckoned a cool hand, and I flatter myself it'll have to be a very cute tiger that can put me out, let him roar as he will. Oh, yes; I will have a shy at the game, for I now know all about it. I haven't read Sanderson, Sterndale, Shakespear, Gordon Cumming, Newall, Burton, Simpson, Forsyth, Brown, &c., all for nothing! I've only just got to condense all these into one, and there you are as plain as A B C. I can easily get introductions to some old cocks out in the gorgeous East who'll put me in the way of sport, and I think the almighty dollar will do the rest."

So saying Mr. Poggie (Mr. Augustus Poggie, as he put on his cards) pulled up his gills, looked at his small self in the glass with a glance of approval, and rang the bell. His valet and factotum, Thompson, a sedate and irreproachable-looking domestic, promptly answered the summons.

"Did you ring, sir?"

"Well, yes, I did, Thompson. Shut the door. I wish to have a few words with you," replied his master, feeling somewhat uneasy as to how his henchman would receive the intelligence he was about to impart. "The fact is, Thompson," he continued, "I'm sick of knocking about at home, and am thinking of going abroad for a bit. I suppose you have no objection to accompany me?"

"Not at all, sir; but might I henquire, sir, what country you intend visiting? If it is Paris, sir, I am well acquainted with that capital. When I was with Lord Scattercash I——"

"Oh, no," interrupted his master, who had heard of Lord Scattercash till he loathed the name. "Oh, no; much further than France. The fact is I want to shoot some big game—tigers

and bears and all those sort of brutes, you know—and intend going to India.”

At the prospect of being so far from his “‘earth and ‘ome”—as Mr. Thompson subsequently expressed himself at his club—that worthy’s face fell, and he began framing excuses. “He was a married man; he was not so young as he was; he had ‘eard that it was very ‘ot in Hindia, and that there were all sorts of serpents and venomous reptiles there,” &c. However, by dint of a little persuasion and the promise of a handsome *douceur* the faithful Thompson was at last prevailed on to accompany his “young gentleman” on the proposed tour, upon the distinct understanding that he “should ‘ave ‘is meals by hisself, and not be asked to sit down with they nasty blacks.” That knotty point being settled, Gussy Poggle, as his friends called him, spent the next fortnight in a state of feverish excitement, making preparations for his expedition. He ordered a wonderful battery of rifles, guns and revolvers; provided himself with a whole cutler’s shop of knives, spears, &c., and no end of useless paraphernalia, with which various tradesmen assured him he *could* not do without if he was going to India, “in fact, sir, we sell an enormous quantity of them to officers going abroad,” and so on, and so on, till Gussy’s luggage assumed gigantic proportions. Then he bustled about buttonholing every friend and acquaintance who had ever been in India, or who had ever had even a sister, a cousin, or an aunt in that part of the British Empire, at the same time overwhelming them with such a torrent of questions as fairly perplexed them, and made their lives a perfect burden to them. Altogether he was in a fine fuss. There is an end to all things, however, and Mr. Poggle’s preparations were finally completed. His passage, as well as that of his faithful servitor, taken on one of the P. and O. steamers for Bombay (which Presidency he had selected as his field of operations), all his museum of arms and ammunition safely soldered up in tin cases, and after a farewell dinner to a few choice kindred spirits at his club—the Diana—one fine day in February saw our friend and Mr. Thompson steaming down the Thames bound for the East.

After the first twenty-four hours, during which poor Poggle suffered all the agonies of *mal de mer*, and heartily wished himself back in his comfortable chambers in the Albany, his sporting ardour revived, and he began to look about amongst his fellow-passengers for some one from whom he might extract information and advice. Amongst others was a genial old gentleman, a deputy commissioner, who, struck by the young man’s unfeigned enthusiasm, lent a kindly ear to all his numerous questions. Sir Theophilus Currybhât (for such was his name) had spent the best part of his life in India, and now, having been knighted for his services, was returning to end his period of service before retiring on a well-earned pension. He had never been much of a sports-

man, and so on the subject nearest Poggie's heart was not able to afford him a great amount of information ; still he promised to do what he could to further his views and assist him to the best of his power. " But take my advice, my young friend," said the old man one day after one of their numerous conversations, " and don't go in for tiger-shooting by yourself. It is a dangerous game at the best of times, even to an experienced man, and if you don't take care you will probably come off second best."

" Oh, yes, I know what you mean," returned Poggie with a self-satisfied air, " but I never mean to give a tiger a chance of mauling *me*. You see I've thought the matter out pretty well, and I've come to the conclusion that through an idea of my own no tiger *can* make good his charge if you are properly armed. I'm in the Volunteers, you know, and I've read military history a good bit, and I find that seldom or ever have cavalry been able to break into an infantry square. Now, I have invented a sort of bayonet that fixes on to my rifle. My servant will also have one similarly fitted, so then all we have to do directly we have fired at the tiger is to 'prepare to receive cavalry,' or rather tigers! I shall be the front rank and Thompson rear rank, and it will, I fancy, have to be a pretty clever tiger that will be able to do us any harm."

At this absurd enunciation an amused smile played over the old Indian's lips, and, though he failed to see the connection between sport and war (he had never read his Jorrocks, you see), he merely replied drily, " Ah! well, I hope you won't require to use cold steel, but that your bullets will do their work without your having to call your useful invention into play."

Malta, Gibraltar, the Suez Canal and Aden had all been passed, the novel sights of which delighted our hero, and at length they reached Bombay. As soon as the ship's anchor was let go our friend was fairly staggered by the rush of coloured gentlemen ("blackies," as Mr. Thompson irreverently termed them) on board. Parsees, Eurasians, touts from hotels, servants of every description and caste, exhibiting most flowery "chits," or characters (most of them, probably all, forged in the Bazaar), agents of different houses, boatmen, &c., gesticulating and shouting at the top of their voices, all combined to produce a perfect pandemonium of sound, as bewildering as it was irritating. However, thanks to his friend Sir Theophilus, Gussy escaped from all this crowd of harpies, and soon he and the faithful Thompson were on their way to the shore with the worthy civilian. Landing at the well-known Apollo Bunda, they were driven to the Byculla Hotel, and the next few days were spent in seeing all the sights and wonders of the place. Engrossing and charming as these were by their very novelty to our friend, he soon began to weary for the greater charms of the jungle. He could think and dream of nothing else but tigers. Tiger waking, tiger sleeping, tiger eating, drinking

and smoking, was the constant theme upon which his thoughts harped, and he was all fire and impatience to be off and beard the monarch in his den.

At last all final preparations were completed, tents, supplies, &c., bought, servants engaged and, most important of all, a thoroughly good shikari secured. This gentleman, by his numerous "chits," if they were to be believed, appeared to combine all the virtues under the sun! Did not General Sir Moses Mulligatawny affirm that "the bearer, Mahomed Bux, has been in my service for a number of years. I consider him a *first-class* shikari, honest, cool, active, intelligent and painstaking?" Did not the noted Captain Bundook also bear testimony to his courage and abilities as a tracker? Whilst Mr. Sheristadar, of the Bombay Civil Service, could hardly express in adequate terms all *he* thought of him! His get-up too impressed Poggie. A tall swaggering Mussulman with his whiskers dyed red and blue and standing out from his cheeks with a fierce twirl on his moustaches, almost gave him the look of a tiger! A gorgeous red and gold turban, a close-fitting suit of dead leaf colour clothes, encircled by a broad leather belt plentifully garnished with hunting knife, bullet pouches and all sorts of gewgaws, all added to make Mahomed Bux present a decidedly sporting appearance—to a novice, *bien entendu*.

So his services at Rs. 50 *per mensem*, paid in advance, and all the Government rewards for tigers killed, were secured by Poggie, who was greatly elated at having obtained such a valuable aid to the object he had in view. Luckily for Mr. Mahomed Bux, Sir Theophilus was *not* present at the interview which ended by the great man entering Poggie's service, otherwise these pages might never have been written.

Mahomed Bux having informed his employer that he knew of a district *swarming* with tigers, was accordingly dispatched on ahead to make all necessary arrangements, and it was agreed that in a week's time he should meet Poggie at the station of Nunderipoor, report progress and lead him to the Elysian fields of shikar. At length the long-looked-for day arrived, and after a weary journey from Bombay Poggie reached his destination, where he was met by the great Mahomed, who greeted him with a profound salaam and a smile of approval lurking beneath his upturned moustache. Among other accomplishments it should be noted that Mahomed possessed, or professed to possess, a knowledge of English, so to our sportsman's inquiry of "Well, what khubbur, Mahomed?" (Gussy had managed to pick up a few words of the vernacular), he replied with an air of conscious superiority, "Verri good, sar! Sahib great gentlemen—great shikari—plenty tiger getting—I know five, six, ten tigers all waiting to eat sahib's bullets."

Poggie was delighted. He wished there and then to be led to

victory. But in this he was doomed to disappointment, for as Mahomed informed him the tiger ground was many "koss" distant, several days' march in fact; "koss" being equivalent to the Scotsman's "bittock," might mean any distance, but of this our friend was naturally ignorant, happily perhaps. He was comforted, however, by the assurance that the country he would have to traverse before reaching his happy hunting grounds was teeming with game. Deer, antelope, partridges, hares, wild fowl and snipe were all waiting for the honour of being done to death by his unerring tube. With this he had perforce to be content, and was somewhat mollified by Thompson's sage remark that these *feræ naturæ* would afford him a good opportunity of testing the accuracy and shooting powers of his battery. For the next ten days, therefore, during which he progressed at the rate of about seven miles a day, he and Thompson had great fun. They blazed away any amount of cartridges with, it must be confessed, alas! but little to show for them. Still they greatly enjoyed themselves and thought it very fine sport. After a while, though, Poggie began to wax impatient and to inquire when on earth they were going to reach the tiger ground. The astute Mahomed, however, had always an excuse ready. At such-and-such a spot he had known for a positive fact of three tigers, but, alas! since he had marked them down a party of sahibs had come that way and shot them all! At another place which *always* held a tiger, a native shikari (might dogs defile his grave) had shot the animal only the previous week. At another spot the water had unfortunately dried up and the tigers had left the neighbourhood—and so on. This, with occasional attacks of fever (pretended, of course) spun out the time pretty well. A month had passed and as yet Poggie had not had even the meagre satisfaction of beholding a tiger's pug, though in his rambles he diligently searched every sandy river bed and dusty path for the sign manual of "*Felis Tigris*." Altogether he was getting rather sick of his own society and his want of success. At last, however, a ray of brightness dawned on the gloom of his despair, for one morning Mohamed appeared with a radiant countenance betokening that at length his efforts were about to be rewarded. Poggie noted the look which presaged good news, and to his impatient inquiry the shikari replied with a confident air:

"*Tiger here, sar!* Plenty bad tiger—plenty bullock killing—that very bad tiger. Master shooting, then village people plenty blessing master. If master coming with me, I showing pug, then while master having breakfast I getting coolies to beat and coming back two hours' time."

"Two hours," thought Poggie; "it's a deuced long time. Why can't we go at once?" he demanded.

"Please, master, no hurry making—that bad bundobust. When

* A "koss" is about two English miles.

sun getting hot then tiger go sleep in bush and master shooting easy."

In spite of his deferential manner there was a certain air of command in Mahomed's words, and so Poggie thought it wisest to submit and accompany the great man to view the pugs. These were pointed out to him with an air of triumph. Tiger's tracks they certainly were; but the imprint of the mighty paw was baked hard and dry in the mud surrounding a little puddle near some scrub jungle, and was probably some weeks old. Still, it undoubtedly was a tiger's track, and though some doubts as to its freshness shot across our sportsman's brain, he kept his thoughts to himself, and to Thompson's remark of "Lor', sir, what a thunderin' big hanimal he must be!" he merely replied, "Yes, and I hope we'll have his jacket off him before night. Just go and load a few fresh cartridges, Thompson, see that those bayonet points are sharp, and put a good edge on my hunting-knife, for there is no knowing what may happen, and it is as well to be prepared." Then he went to breakfast. The prospect of at last meeting with the object of his desire had such an effect on him, that after toying with a bit of grilled fowl, chipping an egg which he did not eat, and swallowing a couple of remarkably stiff "pegs," he rose, lit his pipe, and kept fidgeting about his camp. Eleven o'clock, twelve o'clock, one o'clock passed, and as yet no signs of either Mahomed or the beaters. At half-past one, however, that worthy was seen slowly approaching from the adjacent village, followed by some dozen coolies. Poggie was furious, and began by asking, "What the devil he meant, and where the beaters were?"

"Master, please not getting angry. Patel (head man) this village very bad man, plenty bobbery making, no coolies giving. What can poor man do?" replied the shikari, with folded hands and an air of mock humility.

"D—n the Patel," growled Gussy; then with a sudden air of inspiration he added, "Well, never mind; the jungle seems pretty open here, and I dare say the men you have got will be enough."

"I thinking same like master. We looking, perhaps seeing tiger in bush, then master shooting."

So it was settled that master should pot the sleeping beauty, and forthwith the party set out armed to the teeth, rifles loaded and bayonets fixed. Some ten minutes' walk brought them to the spot where the jungle began, and a careful reconnoissance of each bush and tuft of grass was made. After proceeding some two or three hundred yards with great caution, Mahomed stopped dead short, and seizing Poggie by the arm, said in low and awe-struck tones, "There, sar, tiger there!" pointing to a thick bush some fifty yards distant.

"Where?" asked Gussy breathlessly, and now that the supreme moment had at last arrived, feeling terribly shaky. He began to

wish he had not smoked so much, and to have an irresistible wish for a "nip" of something just to steady him.

"There, sar, there! Master looking close to ground then seeing tiger's skin." Poggie and Thompson both looked hard, the latter all the time wishing himself well out of the adventure, and much inclined to make tracks back to camp.

"Ah! I see him," at length whispered Poggie, as a patch of yellow striped with black caught his eye. "Look, Thompson, don't you see? just between those two small branches. Now," he added, "we will creep up a little nearer. I will fire on my knee, and you stand behind me and fire at the same time, when I give the word 'Fire!' and then bring your rifle down to the charge."

"Y—e—es, sir," stammered the now thoroughly alarmed Thompson, feeling all his courage oozing out of him.

Stealthily they crept up some twenty yards closer, and then, getting into position, fired their volley! There was a tremendous commotion in the bush, but the tiger gave none of those terrifying, hoarse, coughing roars that our friend had expected; moreover, he did not charge out. Reloading quickly, they poured in another volley. This time a curious moaning, choking sound, with more floundering about, was the only response. A third volley was then delivered, and again as on each previous occasion, the dauntless two prepared to "receive tigers." But none came. A feeble, long-drawn gasp was the only sound that reached their ears—then all was still.

"Hooray!" shouted Gussy in elated tones. "He's dead!" And then and there he and Thompson proceeded to pump-handle each other and pour forth mutual congratulations, quite regardless of their respective positions as master and servant.

"Mahomed, you're a brick, and I'll give you Rs. 50 extra for this!" said Gussy, bubbling over with excitement and delight.

"Master plenty kind; master very fine shooter. How can tiger help eating master's bullets?" replied that individual with a low and deferential salaam, as he approached from a considerable distance in the rear, whither he had wisely betaken himself.

"Now," continued Poggie, sitting down and lighting a pipe, "just you and those coolies go and pull the beast out, and we'll measure him at once. Here, Thompson, get out the tape."

Somehow or another as Mahomed and the coolies entered the bush from which to extract the body of the tiger, a sudden fit of home-sickness seemed to attack them, for after one look they promptly decamped.

"Confound the beggars! What are they all about? Go and see, Thompson," said Poggie, feeling decidedly irritated. But it flashed across the brain of that astute servitor that perhaps the tiger was not dead, and he did not quite see the joke of going all by himself to ascertain the fact. He had read in some of the volumes his master had perused with such interest, instances of

apparently defunct tigers suddenly coming to life and inflicting death or serious injuries on those who dared to form a too intimate acquaintance with them. So he ventured mildly to remark, "Don't you think, sir, it might be *safer* if we was both to go together?" Poggle saw the drift of the argument, and muttering something about "no need of being such a funk-stick," stalked off. Arrived at the spot, they stooped down and saw—oh horror! not a tiger, but the hoofs of a chestnut pony sticking out below the brushwood! Alas! it was but too true. The poor animal lying in the thick shade had been mistaken for a tiger, his bright coat being somewhat of the same hue, and the sunlight flickering through the foliage added to the delusion by throwing shadows on it resembling stripes. Yes, there he lay, dead as a door-nail, with the blood trickling out of four bullet wounds. Master and servant stared blankly at each other, then slowly turned and, with a dejected air, retraced their steps to camp. Meanwhile the news had spread, and shortly Poggle's tent was surrounded by a clamouring, angry crowd, headed by the Patel, demanding compensation.

The upshot of it all was that Gussy had to pay up the extortionate demand of Rs. 500 for an animal worth about Rs. 20, and had not even the satisfaction of giving Mahomed Bux the hiding he so richly deserved, for "the treasure" had made himself scarce and was no more seen. And so Gussy returned to Bombay, a sadder and a wiser man, cursing all Indian sport and tiger-shooting in particular.

DUCHESS FRANCES.

By SARAH TYTLER,

AUTHOR OF "CITIZENNE JACQUELINE," "SAINT MUNGO'S CITY," "LADY BELL," ETC.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BONFIRE WHICH CELEBRATED CHERRY AND PETER'S WEDDING.

THE first thing Cherry heard in the morning was that there would be no church-going that day, for London was ablaze. London Bridge was burning with the flames spreading upwards from the river and driving into the City. The affrighted populace were hurrying hither and thither to see the fearful sight and to take note where the danger threatened next, while the unfortunate creatures already burned out, or condemned to see their houses and shops caught in what was not an isolated fire, but a vast conflagration, were fleeing with their goods, flinging them into carts and waggons, lowering them into barges, making the river and every available highway resound with toil and clamour on the Lord's Day.

It was the 2nd of September, 1666, after a protracted spell of heat and drought. The weather was still hot and dry, while there seemed to rise, simultaneously with the fire, a strong east wind, which fanned its progress, carried burning flakes, fire drops and volumes of smoke, and bore destruction on its wings.

Naturally, Frances and Cherry shared the excitement of their neighbours, though Frances was considerably tranquillized by the fact, for which she was continually thanking her stars, that just before going to the Hamiltons' the previous afternoon, she had dispatched the last of her large mails. Cherry's slender stock of luggage, with the address which she could not read without winking, "Mrs. Peter Thornhurst," was included in the consignment. It was all safe at Gravesend, from which Lady Hamilton and her household were to sail on the following day in a ship bound for Dieppe, that route and that mode of travelling having been selected as more economical and advisable for the transport of a family than to journey through Kent to Dover and so across to Calais.

The lodging which Frances still occupied was not in either of the lines of the fire, and even if the house were overtaken, it would be easy to abandon it, with so little to carry away. The freedom of her

mind from personal cares rendered the vivacious young woman all the more bent on making what she could of the catastrophe, and seeing everything that was to be seen on the eve of her departure.

At last Peter Thornhurst arrived, his cravat a scorched rag, his best regimentals torn and soiled, his face and hands black. It was clear that he had not been idle; it was more than probable that he had not contented himself with inquiring after the Hills' welfare, but had been in the thick of the turmoil without once going home or retiring to bed, always supposing the fire had left him a home and a bed to retire to. However, he had not only recovered his good-humour, he was in the wild, mad spirit which fighting an enemy of any kind is apt to excite in an inexperienced young fellow whose superabundant energy has not hitherto had a sufficient vent. His first words were, "Cheer up, Cherry; they're all alive and kicking. They had to turn out in the middle of the night, no doubt, for the place was too hot to hold 'em. The ware-rooms and the dwelling-place have made a fine blaze hours ago, but your Uncle Hill secured the sticks of furniture and such of his goods as are worth lugging about. Your uncle's hands are hanging down his back instead of his front, and your aunt hath her beaver tied over her nightcap, but I know not that anything worse has befallen them, or that they are in a much poorer plight than they were before. They will have the great fire to blame for their ruin, and their neighbours' sins to rail at as the cause of the punishment which is fallen alike on the innocent and the guilty. They are lodged for the nonce in the house of your uncle's friend, Master Pratt, in Gracious Street. If the fire follow them there, as by all the signs it is like enough to do, they and the Pratts, with other dishoused folk, have still the fields outside to camp in—no great hardship in such weather."

"Let me go to them," besought Cherry, but she was less her own mistress than ever, and such a proceeding was not to be thought of for the others.

"Don't be silly, Cousin Cherry," cried Frances; "let us all up and out to the fire. I never had the luck to see one worth speaking of in my life before, and I've been dying to get at this for the last hour."

"I'm with you, Cousin Hamilton. I'm your man, if you'll have me," proclaimed Peter, returning for the moment to his former allegiance in his unthinking sympathy with the high-spirited girl's keen interest in the scene, and his hearty approval of her dauntless courage. "You'll let me convoy you and Cherry, and take you to the best points for beholding the most extraordinary spectacle you've ever witnessed or ever will witness."

Peter was right. For four days the fire raged at its height, finding abundance of material to work upon at the wharves stored with oil, pitch, sugar, spirits and timber, and in the narrow streets, where the booths were piled with combustible wares, and in the projecting

houses composed of lath and plaster, well-nigh touching each other. It was at once a vast spectacle touching the two extremes of sublimity and ghastliness, and an appalling tragedy played out before the fascinated eyes of many thousands of spectators. So great was the fascination, that the people who were not engrossed in desperate efforts to save their possessions, which had taken years of industry and care to gather, spent their time in rushing from place to place in a very delirium of sight-seeing, for in the beginning men's skill and strength were paralyzed so far as any attempt to cope with and overcome the savage servant risen in revolt and become their master. Now people ran to see the river, with its waters rosy from the reflected light, covered with barges laden with fugitives and household goods—among them the tuneful virginals, of which Pepys remarked so many, that one associates with very different accompaniments—the very rippling wavelets strewn with bedding, bales and packages, which their hard-pressed owners preferred to trust to the water rather than to the fire. Now the aim was the tower of some church yet unassailed, some rising ground, some vantage of the high stairs or the upper windows of an isolated house, from which the watchers could look abroad on the fiery deluge.

The streets into which the fire had not swept were encumbered with wains, carts and barrows of every description, bewildered, exhausted foot passengers, galloping soldiers, courtiers exerting themselves worthily for once, led by the King and the Duke of York, superintending the blowing-up of the houses, which formed the sole available effort against the enemy. The fire was thus kept at bay in its westward course and at the Tower, about which it leaped and played, without, however, reaching the citadel and powder magazine, the explosion of which would have added to the other form of devastation, the tearing and wrecking of the ships in the river and the sacrifice of a hecatomb of lives.

Cherry after a time got over the agony of knowing such desolation as asked nothing less than imperial riches and power to relieve it. Unlike the visitation of the plague, the havoc of the fire was largely wrought, not by death, but in the shape of deprivation and hardship to the living; for the mass of the victims got timely warning to escape with their lives, and even to carry out the sick and bed-ridden to die of exposure and terror very likely, but not in the fire. Being freed from this apprehension for the lives of her fellows, which swallows up every other, Cherry was taken with the delirium which held so many of her contemporaries in its fevered grip. She rushed here and there with Frances and Peter, now getting the chance of a coach, now sharing a barge, with other sight-seers, for the purpose of catching every aspect of the phenomenon.

It was impossible for women, well-nigh for men, to approach within a considerable distance of the various centres of ruin, such

furnace heat was in the air above and the ashen-strewn road beneath; such danger from crashing beams, molten metal, flying stones and a rain of burning atoms. Besides, as church after church became engulfed, the various merchant companies' fine halls fell down, and steeples toppled over like the houses of cards which Mrs. Frances Stewart amused herself with building and demolishing, whole streets became shapeless masses of crumbling, reeking rubbish. The very landmarks were lost, while men who could keep their footing wandered as in a pathless desert. Yet the mellow September sun, the lustrous harvest moon, shone on behind the mingled glare and obscurity from which, in lulls of the tempest of fire, these heavenly rulers of the day and night emerged in brightness and serenity, as if all was peace and prosperity in this city of London, of which an eye-witness could say it had been but was not.

Cherry saw it all, and had it indelibly imprinted on her brain. From a barge on the river she beheld London Bridge, then crowded with shops and houses, burning from end to end, an arch of fire spanning the river. She too watched the pigeons, reluctant to quit their old nooks and crannies, wheeling round and round as moths encircle a candle till their wings were burnt, and the birds dropped fluttering into the water. Lower down the river side she witnessed another fiery bow a mile long, glowing in the dusk, running up to the higher ridges of the city.* She saw the whole heavens like the top of a burning oven, as it was noted for forty miles round London. She was told it was reckoned ten thousand houses and a hundred churches† had perished from Thames to Chepe, from Smithfield to the Temple, in Cornhill, Fenchurch Street, Gracechurch Street (which had been the Hills' first refuge), Old Bailey, Ludgate Hill, Watling Street. With her own half-deafened ears she heard "the noise and crackling and thunder of the impetuous flames" drowning the shouts and shrieks of men and women. With her own dazzled eyes she saw the glow when night came on, "a most horrid, malicious, bloody flame, not like the fine flame of an ordinary fire." She stood transfixed, though Frances herself was screaming to her to come back, until Peter Thornhurst seized her by the arm and dragged her away, for there was old St. Paul's, which had been under repair and was surrounded by scaffolding, blazing from basement to vaulted roof, "its great stones flying like grenades," its lead, iron and brass liquid fire, Inigo Jones's noble portico split asunder.

Cherry was told, though she was not permitted to ascertain this for herself, that two hundred thousand of the citizens, men, women and children of all ranks and ages, with such household stuff as they had saved, were lying out in the fields as far as

* Pepys.

† Evelyn.

Highgate, forming a huge ring of desolate human beings, some beneath rude tents and hastily-reared wooden sheds, the most of them undefended under the sky. She guessed that if the Hills' kinsfolk at Islington, doubtless like their neighbours with many claims on their charity, could not take all the family in or make room for more than Mrs. Hill and her baby, and perhaps sickly little Peter, Cherry's Uncle Hill and the elder children were in the fields. But when she fell to deploring their misfortunes, and to beseeching Frances to pay a last visit to the family in their adversity, she was promptly stopped. Frances reminded her cousin that they could do nothing to speak of to help either the Hills or any one else. They themselves were quite poor gentlefolks, who required all their resources for their long journey and their settlement in France. The weather was fine, which was in favour of the unlucky wretches, to whom it was understood that Parliament was to vote a liberal grant. If the Hills demanded special assistance, cousin Peter, who would be as good as a single man for half-a-dozen years to come, could look to them when the ladies were gone. For that matter Frances, notwithstanding her inquisitiveness, was not merely bent on setting out on her travels; she would have kept to her original time if she could have managed it. That awful Sunday, the first day of the fire, would have satisfied her curiosity; she would have left with the destruction raging. It was a proof of the marked individuality and the strong will of the young matron that she clamoured for the barge she had bespoken to take her and her company to Gravesend. She would not have been reconciled to its having been appropriated by those who were in greater need of it, if she had not been assured that the ship would not sail to a day. For all the able-bodied seamen had been summoned from Greenwich and Deptford, and even from so great a distance as Gravesend, to help in blowing up the houses and leaving wide spaces of ruins, on which the fire could not feed, while neither could it overleap them; so that there was hope it would finally be starved out, rather than extinguished.

That was a busy week for Peter Thornhurst, in more than in doing Frances' bidding in escorting her and Cherry everywhere. He scampered like a boy to each fresh outbreak; he was also on duty with his regiment in keeping clear the roads which were open, and in guarding what of the nature of public stores and arsenals were left. Whenever he was settling down he was roused anew by reports of the French or the Dutch improving the occasion to sail up the river and land troops to conquer the country.

Peter experienced a prolongation of his youthful exhilaration under the high pressure of events. It aided him in forgetting the burden of care which had suddenly been deposited on his reative shoulders. It rendered him callous to the suspicious state of mind which led him, unconfessedly even to himself, to welcome one item in the devastation, namely, that the post-houses had perished among

so many other houses, so that for a short period no letters could either be received in London or sent out of it, unless by a special messenger. And if any special messenger hurried up from the depth of the country to hold a wrathful interview with a defaulter, he would be a clever countryman who could, in the general wreck and disorder, either pick out his way or hit on his man without an immense expenditure of time and trouble.

Sometimes Cherry tore herself from the engrossing passion of the hour, to be perplexed and pained by the change in Peter Thornhurst. He did not seem to know how to refuse to report himself at Lady Hamilton's lodging, even when he was not there to be her cavalier for the moment. But he came in strange humours; his restlessness was unappeasable. Equally inexhaustible as it appeared was the reckless glee with which he would start off to face a fresh danger out of his province. Cherry, in her old woman's responsible way, felt bound to remonstrate. She would put her hand on his sleeve timidly and nervously, for she had grown very timid and nervous where her old familiar companion was concerned, and try to get him to see that such and such a perilous expedition was uncalled for on his part; he had better bide where he was, or if not that, promise to be less venturesome. At least, would he take the ladies' lodging on his way back, just to assure them that he was safe? Cherry's face was so gentle and wistful as she pled, that Peter's heart might have melted so far as to humour her, anyhow to answer her softly, had not Frances struck in with her gay gibes and light mockery. My young madam was soon seeking to control her good man; she was assuming betimes the airs of authority and the privileged importunity belonging to an old married woman. Why, she, Frances, would not try them on to this day with her George!

Then Peter would flush up with shame and resentment, shake off Cherry roughly and protest that he would be under no woman's thumb—no, not even his cousin Hamilton's, he would crave leave to tell her. It was not the way with the lads in his part of the world any more than with soldiers like Sir George Hamilton. He, Peter, had a man's part to play and he meant to play it—Cherry or any other maid might whistle for him till she was tired, it would be long enough before he would answer her—and out he would tramp.

When he was gone Frances would laugh long and loud at his "tantrums," as she would call them. "Oh, these men, these men!" she would cry, "only this is a boy and not such a man as I have known—poor Dick Talbot for instance. I hear he is going to console himself with that goose, Mrs. Boynton—the more fool he. But she may have him for her pains—she'll never get the whip hand of him as I should have done. We were talking of cousin Peter—mercy on us, Cousin Cherry, you must teach your squire manners when he is fairly tied to your apron-string."

Poor Cherry was not thinking of that far future, she was trembling and quaking lest she should not see Peter's chubby, boyish face again in this present, so full of breathless agitation.

It was the fault of Frances in one of these intolerable bantering attacks, by which she really meant nothing save to pass the time, that Peter stood out doggedly, in the offended dignity of his teens, and availing himself of the excuse of such regimental obligations as were beginning to bind him, neglected to get leave of absence to accompany his girl-wife and her guardian to Gravesend, on board the ship bound for France. It might fall into the hands of the Dutch, or be taken by privateers, for aught that he seemed to care. In place of saying his long farewell with becoming *empressement* at the last landing-place on the wharf, if not on board the schooner, he parted from Cherry as he parted from his cousin Hamilton, with sulky coolness on the floor of the lodging-house parlour.

"Never mind, Cherry," said Frances, glancing into the girl's quivering face after her bridegroom was gone, and speaking with some compunction—doubtless dating from a dim recollection of the old stabs Harry Jermyn used to deal to her. "If we have been mistaken in him, it will be the worse for him, I can tell my young gentleman, in the long run."

"Don't, Cousin Frances, don't," said Cherry faintly. "Peter doth not mean any harm. He is only young and hasty——"

"And a raw lout and a stiff-necked male," retorted Frances unceremoniously. "Well, we'll bring the foolish fellow to his senses, long before you grow up fit for him to claim you. We'll have him sue at your feet, and let him stay there in the cold, till he learn to rate thee at thy proper value, little wife."

CHAPTER XIV.

A BLOW—PARIS UNDER LOUIS THE GREAT—A COUPLE OF COUNTESESSES.

SIR GEORGE HAMILTON met his wife and her household on the Paris *quai* at which the Rouen barges landed their freight. Cherry found him then and always "a gallant and worthy gentleman," not so accomplished as his brother Anthony, not double-tongued like his brother Richard, but yielding to none in his enthusiasm for his profession. His family saw little of him even when he was in Paris, and as foreign campaigns with their trumpet blasts of martial glory were the chronic accompaniment of the first half of Louis XIV.'s long reign, Sir George and his English gendarmes were largely on the frontier or far beyond the frontier, willingly fighting the battles of royal ambition and despotism. The head of the house appeared, for the most part, in flying visits

to the suite of stately, even luxurious apartments in which Frances had cleverly ensconced herself and her belongings. The apartments did not belong to any ordinary hostelry or lodging-house, but to one of the great family *hôtels*, the owners of which were nobles of the nobles, so entirely beyond demeaning themselves by anything they chose to do, that it struck nobody it was out of keeping for them to let a part of their huge ancient dwellings.

It was the Paris of narrow streets, tall houses and crowded *quais*, with the mud smelling so vilely that the odour could be described as that of sulphur. It was also the Paris of the Faubourg St. Germain in its palmiest days, when it was full of fair palaces and *hôtels*, of "the Luxembourg," "Vendosmes," "Guyse," "Condé," &c., &c., in their green gardens surrounded by high walls.

The royal palace of the Louvre was still not quite built, while it was already the marvel of Europe for its architectural perfection and magnificence.

Stout citizens in their cloth suits, lean craftsmen in their dark blouses and red caps, street *gamins* capering among the mud, smart *grisettes* in their short petticoats and high-crowned caps, were to be found everywhere. But a stranger had to seek the *cours-la-Reine*, the favourite promenade in the days of promenades, if he wanted to see noble dames in hanging sleeves, pearl drops, and the new useful toys of watches hanging at the ladies' girdles. There were the little dancing curls Migniard painted and the English court copied, and set coquettishly on the curls were huge or tiny hats, as fashion shifted. The lily hands waved cobweb handkerchiefs, or offered jewelled pouncet-boxes, or flirted peacock fans. Picturesque and splendid figures walked by the side of the elegant women, or shouldered their way in broad contrast among cardinals in their scarlet hats, priests in their skull caps and *soutanes*, frocked monks, black, white and grey. It seemed as if every distinguished man at home or abroad were either an *abbé* or a general. The warriors might be weather-beaten or bearing the scars of battle, but their shells were glorious—the finest gilt or russet gorgets and breast-plates Milan could produce, scarlet military scarfs, long jack boots, spurs with six rowels. The fortress towers of the Bastille were not for the frequenters of the *cours-la-Reine*, they had an aristocratic prison all to themselves in the Castle of Vincennes.

To Cherry the new world into which she was introduced was one full of tapestries, pictures, porcelain, pleached alleys, terraced walks, and marble statues, playing fountains and wonderful grottoes—among which an enchanted princess might well have dwelt and disported herself, but of which Cherry Norton, with all her imagination, could not have conceived the bare existence when she abode in Speedwell Lane.

Soon, however, a great blow fell on the unresisting girl, and

served to divide still more effectually her past from her present life. It came in the form of a letter, addressed in a stiff, half text-hand, "For Mistress Peter Thornhurst, care of my Lady Hamilton, to be heard of at the English Ambassador's."

It was the first letter Cherry had received under her married name, and she had not so much as once signed herself "Cherry Thornhurst." She had longed to write to Peter, as a young girl would to a brother, or a brotherly boy with whom she had been on sisterly terms, and tell him her strange adventures and wonderful experiences, but Frances had prevented her. Frances was not much given to indulge in writing on her own account, and she laughed at the idea of Cherry's taking pen in hand, saying the gentleman ought to write first. With Cherry a letter was an epistle, an intellectual effort, grave and important, demanding time, trouble and solitude; whereas Frances was in the habit from the first, of monopolising all Cherry's cares and claiming her services at any moment. The child's sensitive conscience reproached her for not even contriving to write a few lines to her Aunt Hill, since she was uncertain of the Hills' address after they were burnt out and could only communicate with them through their former lodger. But here at last Peter had begun the correspondence, as Frances had said he should do, and Cherry was allowed a moment to open her husband's first letter to her in happy excitement. It was not till she had mastered the brief contents that she let it fall from her trembling hand, and stared down on it in blank dismay.

The letter ran thus:

"MADAM,

"I hereby address you for the first and last time by a title to which you have not the smallest right. I do it because if I were to give you what remaineth, your real name, I and my friends are of opinion that this letter might be withheld from you, while it is needful you, as well as others, should know my mind. I have been advised, and I likewise advise you, that no clergyman or magistrate in England will uphold as binding the so-called ceremony of marriage which passed between us in the church of St. Anne's—church and registry being clean burnt down the same night. The scandal was wrought on the faith of my worshipful father's consent—which was, indeed, more of a prohibit of the farce than a warrant for it. Had his letter not been grossly misrepresented, if not tampered with, no clergyman would have dared to celebrate the rite which I herewith denounce as an outrage on law and justice, and I renounce at the same time every obligation contained in it, and defy you and those acting for you to compel me to the fulfilment of a falsely-got contract. No more at present.

"I sign myself your servant, but not one whit your husband,

"PETER THORNHURST."

Below these were some blotted, nearly illegible lines, no doubt written by Peter out of his own head, and not at the dictation of his furious uncle, the Squire of Three Elms, who had indeed arrived in all that was left of London, and made his way to his rash nephew, too late to do more than utter a wrathful protest.

"Oh, Cherry!" wrote Peter, neither logically nor kindly—what could be expected from a lad stung and goaded to madness? "how could you let me do it? I know you are younger than I, but at least thou shouldst have known cousin Hamilton better, and thou wert always singing her praises. What concern had she to make us all so miserable? I would throw up my commission and enlist as a common soldier, or run away as a cabin-boy in any of the ships that come up the river, and get far from it all, only father and mother would be wretched, and they have done nothing—they have not even married in haste to please 'a young Jezebel,' as Uncle Thornhurst hath called her. Moreover, father hath had money at different times from his brother, and there are my brothers and sisters at home. Now Uncle Thornhurst swears he will call up the debt and sell his own brother out of the parsonage, while mother and the boys and girls may go a-begging if it come to that, unless I submit to his will and have nought more to do with you, which I'm fain to consent to, for you've got me into a pretty mess, and I only wishing to be of service to you. I never meant to marry thee or anybody else—that's the plain truth, and we're better quit of each other. There is no denying you've got me into a horrible scrape. You and your relations, the Hills, as well as my Lady Hamilton, have been dear friends to me. But Uncle Thornhurst says he'll get me out of the trouble if money and right will do it, so that I do his bidding; and I'll try to bear no malice, only I don't wish to see your face again, Cherry Norton, and I bid you farewell for ever.—P. T."

"What is it? What doth my gentleman say?" cried Frances inquisitively, catching a glimpse of the white face of the reader of the letter and snatching it from the floor, as one who had a right to know its contents. Frances's own face flamed as she read. "The villain!" she cried. "The insolent, forsworn young villain! But he's set on by his elders—that old two-faced, beggarly black-coat of a father of his, and his 'honoured uncle' of Three Elms. Much they'll make of it! The marriage is legal—I'll take my oath on it, Cherry. We'll keep the fellow to his bond, an' we Hamiltons have to move heaven and earth, and petition the king here and the king there to see you're owned the wife you certainly are, child."

"Oh, for mercy's sake, no! Cousin Frances," pled Cherry, clasping her hands and sinking down on her knees. "Don't force him to have me against his will. I said we were a deal too young to marry. I did not know who or what put it into his head, and you can see he desires it no more. Let us bide as we are, far apart,

and for shame's sake, never see each other's faces again, as he says. It was all an unhappy mistake, by which you vainly thought to better our lots; you never meant to harm us—I know that, Cousin Frances, if I know aught—I'm as sure of it as I'm sure of my life. But enough mischief hath been done and cruel strife brought about. Oh, cousin, suffer me to stay your servant, your slave, and let Peter Thornhurst go about his business."

"I'll do nothing of the kind," cried Frances indignantly. "I vow I'll be even with the young rascal for trying to get out of his bargain. And I take it very ill of you, madam, whose fortunes in especial I sought to better, that you should be one of the first to turn against me and seek to push me into a corner. I'm 'a young Jezebel' am I? I'll not forget that, my master, who pretended to be my humble servant. If my George heard it he would over to England and run the slanderer through the body, boy as he is, without thinking twice. Oh, no, Cherry, you need not be afeared for your *gallant, honourable* partner. I'll bide my time and possess my soul in patience. We'll do nought at present, and there is no great harm done at this date, neither, for you are to be with me till you grow up," reflected Frances, cooling down and showing herself curiously practical. "He might have sent you a gift at times, like any other considerate husband; but he ain't the squire of Three Elms yet. His tyrant of an uncle will hold his purse strings tight, and in the meanwhile I'm come bound for thy keep—that was my part of the compact. But just you wait till the time arrive for me to do without you, for you to enter upon your honours and for the goose to be worth the plucking, then, as sure as my name is Frances Hamilton, you'll be Madam Thornhurst and lady of Three Elms; your squire may whistle on his thumb or dance a fandango—fancy a bear like Peter dancing!—he'll never prevent it if there's proper law and authority and the remembrance of court favour to be found in England. Now, hold your tongue, Cousin Cherry, and don't be a fool, for I'll have none of your squeamish outcries and affected refusals, which would put me in a nice position. But we'll say no more on't at present when there is no hurry and matters of importance of this date to consider—the three Queens and Madame and Mademoiselle to wait upon, the Duchesse de Nevers's invitation, Madame de Croy's visit—I protest my hands are full already. We'll drop the subject of your affairs, if you please, Cherry."

This was the beginning of the disillusion which Cherry had to suffer where Frances was concerned—not that it was ever a complete disillusion, and perhaps the girl, in her magnanimity and generosity, was wiser and fairer than many a critic and judge grown grey in general distrust and knowledge of the evil which is in the world. She never would believe that her cousin had not meant well by her and Peter Thornhurst in the active part which Frances had taken in bringing them together, though unfortunately

she had been monstrously deceived. But even in the act of screening Lady Hamilton it was torture to Cherry, not merely to find herself rejected and repudiated, because of having all but compassed Peter and his family's ruin, to know in addition that her cousin's fiery, indomitable spirit was bent on keeping Peter to his word. Girl as Cherry was her sense of womanly humiliation was intense, and she was not so much as permitted to remonstrate with regard to what was truly her own affair. She had not the small comfort of bemoaning the tremendous blunder which had been committed and crying over her bridegroom's hardness of heart. It was "Cherry" here and "Cherry" there, "Cherry, I won't have you mope," "Cherry, you're a lucky girl to have such an amusing window at your elbow and a *fauteuil* like a feather bed to loll upon with Baby. Now, tie on your hat and go with Bet Ball and the child to have a look at the shops—such shops!—and a run in one or other of their gardens—what gardens! Canst think of anything more agreeable? Sure I can't, and I vow I envy you while I have to sit here with my hands in my lap, playing propriety, receiving one of the Queen-dowager's gentlemen, or one of the young Queen's ladies, and all the time I have the greatest difficulty not to yawn in the messenger's face."

After all, though those first months in Paris made a bad time for the expatriated girl, it is possible that the selfish policy which Frances adopted was the best discipline for the victim. She was very young, quite young enough, in spite of the tenacity of her affections, to be distracted from her own thoughts and to learn to forget in a measure. She was amidst new scenes and faces, the flow of life was altogether strange and rousing to her.

Frances was caught up and carried away willingly in that whirl of brilliantly dissipated life. Never was Paris more splendid and gay than when Louis XIV. was completing the destruction of constitutional France which the great Cardinal had begun, waging war right and left with a brutal indifference to consequences and laying the foundation of the miseries of his successors. The little man with the enormous perriwig, the imperial nose and the nod of Jove, wore the laurels which Turenne and Condé won for him as if he had been a Cæsar in his own person. There was one queen at the Louvre, another at the Palais Royal and a third at St. Germain. As if that were not enough there figured in addition poor, lovely, thoughtless, fore-doomed Madame the Duchess of Orleans, the daughter of England and the wife of Louis' jackanapes of a brother, together with the king's cousin, the most uncouth, grotesque, yet imposing of *Grandes Mademoiselles*.

Following each other in rapid succession were royal hunts, sometimes prolonged for a week, runnings at the ring, shooting at "popejays," these eternal promenades, the Spanish and Italian custom of concerts with collations in the open air under the trees of Fontainebleau or on the terraces of Versailles or the Luxembourg,

masques, vaudevilles, especially ballets got up with costly and ingenious Italian machinery. Louis, so long as he was young, was not only fond of dancing, he liked to display his agility and grace, in character, and before an admiring court and a select *bourgeoisie*.

As time passed, Lady Hamilton, to do her justice, did not fail in procuring the advantages she had promised to get for Cherry Norton. Frances openly and unquestioningly served herself first; but after she was served, she was quite willing that her cousin should have her share of the good things which were going. When money was plentiful with her ladyship, which certainly was not too often, while there were heavy personal demands on her purse, she procured for Cherry—it goes without saying making clever bargains in the procuring—the masters and mistresses in the French and Italian languages, in the study of the harpsichord, and the practice of delicate embroidery, which Lady Hamilton had engaged to furnish for Mrs. Peter Thornhurst—always Mrs. Peter Thornhurst.

Cherry had been startled and agitated at the first sound of the name—afterwards she had drooped and shrunk from it, until at last custom rendered it so familiar that it ceased to strike her ear with a cruel pang which smote to the heart. Frances was resolute alike in giving Cherry what her cousin maintained was the girl's proper title, and in fulfilling Lady Hamilton's half of the bond—the other half of which Ensign Peter Thornhurst was so left to himself as to refuse, for the present, to comply with.

Frances was also keen-sighted and scrupulous about demolishing any of Cherry's chances, or giving further ground of complaint and offence where she was concerned. Not long after Lady Hamilton's arrival in France she joined the Roman Catholic Church, but Cherry could say with perfect truth that her friend and hostess never attempted to bias her little cousin in the matter. She would have opposed any change of creed on the girl's part. For, while it was all very well for Lady Hamilton, whose fortunes were thenceforth cast in France, to attend with full liberty and lively gratification all the solemn *te deums* and masses for the souls of the slain, celebrated in recognition of the victories in which her husband played a conspicuous part, it would have been very ill where the prospects of the future Madam Thornhurst, of Three Elms, were in question, that she should set up as a Romanist. Happily Cherry had no inclination in that direction. She looked with awe and admiration on the magnificent churches, but she was faithful to her early standards, and if she had learnt anything in her Uncle Hill's house it was love of freedom of thought and simplicity of worship.

Though Cherry's lessons fluctuated with the comparative lightness or heaviness of Frances's purse, and though Cherry had little heart for them at first, she was by nature so conscientious and intelligent that she made progress in spite of herself, and grew interested and eager in these new pursuits. She had other sources

of instruction. She accompanied Lady Hamilton to the theatre and listened entranced to the divine rant of *The Cid* and the *Horaces*, written by that Pierre Corneille who in his black velvet company suit had been an easy-going, droll fellow, who would have his cup, his pipe and his jest whatever befell, and voted heroics a professional waste, apart from pasteboard kings and queens. She laughed as a girl should laugh at the inimitable fun of the *Malade Imaginaire* and the *Médecin Malgré Lui*, made by the quiet, harassed player, who was said to be of a melancholic temperament and jaundiced with jealousy on his own account.

Cherry was even taken, her heart fluttering in the utmost trepidation, across the threshold of that Hôtel de Rambouillet which had been, in the last reign, the meeting place of those *précieuses ridicules*, whom Molière held up to ridicule, who were good-natured enough, those of them who remained, to go and look on and laugh at his travesty of their pedantry. Frances did not care a straw for precise grammar or polite diction, but she loved to be in the fashion, which was carrying the gay world to the old *hôtel* to measure, by the surviving remnant of the originals, the truth of the player's satire. Therefore Cherry had the enviable opportunity of being in the company of the *marquise de marquises*, Madame de Sévigné, the youngest-hearted, most exquisite-mannered woman in France, of little Mademoiselle de Scudery, who had written *The Grand Cyrus* and other famous romances in ten volumes, and of La Fontaine in his wise child's dreamland of wolves and lambs, long-legged storks and long-necked jars. Happy Cherry! to receive such a liberal education.

It was of less consequence to Cherry's growth in knowledge that from the background of her youth and lower rank, she witnessed with eyes and lips open to swallow all the marvels the ballet of the "Birth of Venus," in which Madame the Princess Henrietta was Venus and Monsieur, her husband, the star of day. Henrietta was on a throne of mother-of-pearl, when Monsieur summoned her to the celestial regions, and she "majestically ascended to the sound of enchanting music." Then the princess assumed a different part and danced as Roxana to accompany the dancing of Louis as Alexander.

After Frances was settled in France, the marriage of Elizabeth Hamilton and the Comte de Gramont took place in England, and renewed efforts were made to get his offences condoned, so that he might return home with his bride. His sister, Madame St. Chaumont, was governess to the little daughter of Madame, and through the entreaties of the first and the influence of the second, the interesting prodigal was at length permitted to reappear in the old scenes of his gambling, duelling, &c. So concerned was King Charles in the event that he wrote to bespeak the friendly offices of his sister for Elizabeth Hamilton, mentioning the merit of her family and describing her in the words, "she is as good a creature

as ever lived." He did not say so much for her personal attractions, which he considered on the wane, but he remarked, "she will pass for a handsome woman in France," a doubtful compliment to Gallic taste.

Louis had been slow to pardon Count Philibert, but he immediately received the countess into high favour. Louis loved wit next to beauty, and possibly did not find much more of it in his succession of fair frail mistresses, La Vallière, Montespan, &c., than in his gentle, foolish Spanish Infanta. So that etiquette was maintained, the Queen played her part of slighted wife, with even more childish unconcern than was displayed in England by Catherine of Braganza. Not till he was advanced in life and had contracted a private marriage with the plain-featured widow of the crooked dramatist, Scarron, was Louis' intellect met and satisfied by any woman intimately connected with him. But while he was still young, he was so agreeably entertained by the sparkling conversation of Elizabeth de Gramont, that in order to be able to avail himself of it more frequently he gave her a small country house within his park of Versailles. On George Hamilton as well as on his brother Anthony, Louis bestowed the title of count, and Count George had the rank of field marshal in the French army, which was kept hard at work, what with the King's invasion of Spain, on the non-payment of the Infanta's huge dowry; what with his descent on Holland and seizure of Alsâce and Lorraine. The two sisters-in-law's rank and court favour were so well assured that the Prince of Como, visiting Paris at this date and sumptuously entertained by the Gramonts, was equally dazzled by Elizabeth's fine *nez retroussé* and Frances's wild-rose complexion and fair floating curls.

Cherry was not denied the last polish of mixing occasionally with the *crème de la crème* of French society under the old *régime*, while—fortunately for her—first her youth and always the peculiarity of her position modified the association. In the meantime she was growing up a fair and sweet woman, though destitute of the *espéglerie* of Elizabeth de Gramont or the daring of Frances Hamilton, and looking perhaps a little tame and dull to French eyes after these high-spirited brilliant young matrons. For Cherry too ought to have been emancipated. She was a matron also, not a mere *jeune ingénue*, but a youthful matron, in the shade, waiting to be claimed and acknowledged. However, the romance which might have attended on the situation and the sentiment it might have excited were nipped in the bud by Cherry's shyness and reserve, which caused her carefully to shun every discussion of her circumstances or even distant allusion to them. She was styled *une vraie Anglaise*, beautiful as an angel after the fashion of many of these Englishwomen, but insipid as human angels are apt to be to men and women of the world—virtuous as the day without doubt, and a great assistance to young Countess George. Behold all.

With Cherry's growth she lost of necessity much of her early quaintness, and what was more to be regretted, she was deprived to a considerable extent, by the nature of her story, of what had been her original absence of self-consciousness. Loving and true, with a big heart, a generous temper and a vivid imagination, but inevitably always a little preoccupied and more than a little constrained. A girl with a history, which in its peculiarity and sadness she did not care to reveal, but strove on the contrary to hide, so that it stood as a barrier between her and her neighbours and separated her from them more effectually than her dependence on the Hills and her drudgery for them in the past had ever divided her from her fellow-creatures. A lovely, isolated young mortal, delicate and sensitive-minded, only delivered from the depths of miserable egotism and morbid feeling which are apt to swamp such a poor heroine, by the fact that her nature was sound and sympathetic to the core.

Cherry's great defence and consolation was not far to seek; she was as constantly and imperatively needed in the lofty, richly-decorated suite of apartments in the noble *hôtel* in which Frances and her family dwelt, as ever the brave toiling child had been in the poverty-stricken house in Speedwell Lane.

In course of years there were other babies besides the little Elizabeth, two more tiny girls, Frances and Mary, to cling to Cherry and for her to cling to, where she stood, in some respects a pillar of salt, in spite of her youth, beauty and goodness in a radiant, fruitful landscape.

Frances and her children were an anchor for Cherry when she awoke of a night and felt all at once surging in her ears that clangour of glorious war which was always sounding near or far, an accompaniment, like the deep bass of the sea, to the endless ceremonials and festivities. Cherry would sit up in the darkness and think of the strife of nations, and of the English regiments sent abroad to play their part in those bloody battles which Turenne, Condé and Count George were perpetually fighting, without a dream of apprehension on Frances' part for her soldier whose trade was war. Yet there was many a tribute to Bellona paid on these stricken fields, and Count George had been at least once dangerously wounded.

How ardently a rustic lad from Kent whom Cherry knew an age ago, had desired to see a campaign! Was it not too probable that he, a unit in a multitude, would be cast on one of those ghastly heaps of carnage, present to her horrified fancy—no hand to staunch the wounds from which his life blood was flowing, no arm to pillow his dying head, no loving lips that trembled as they whispered words of eternal hope in the ears growing dull to earthly sounds.

Cherry saw him for the moment as plainly as if she had been by his side. He was not the Peter Thornhurst who had fiercely

disowned her, or the youthful bridegroom who had failed like a sulky schoolboy to bid her farewell. He was not even the homely friendly comrade who had done her a good turn in her hard work in Speedwell Lane, out of the superabundance of his energy and careless good-will. He was the gallant, simple-minded young fellow who had consented to offer himself up in order to free her from her toils and to oblige and solace his cousin Hamilton. He was the young husband who with averted eyes, but with a warm hand clasping her cold one, had vowed before God and man to cherish and defend her. And she had vowed—awakening suddenly to the heights of his manliness and magnanimity and to the corresponding depths of tender trust and faithful affection which it was for her to give him in return—to love, honour and obey him till death did them part. She had bestowed on him all her golden grain which had ripened in a night, in a strange, blissful dream, that was yet, and would always be, a vivid reality in the core of her innocent widowed heart. She knew now, with what sorrow and shame were beyond expression, how she had been imposed upon him by Frances' self-will and determination. What wonder that his kinsman, on whom a march had been stolen, was wild with rage? What wonder that Peter, with his uncle taunting and threatening him, had been harsh and cruel?

It was all very pitiful and lamentable, but Cherry in her honesty and meekness was ready to admit that the Thornhursts were not entirely to blame. At present there was nothing more to be said or done, unless Cherry, in defiance of Frances's high-handed doggedness and the authority she was entitled to exert over her cousin, were happily to die, and so free Peter Thornhurst effectually from the last shadow of his bondage; or unless some time, somehow the girl were able to make him understand that she voluntarily withdrew the most distant claim to be his wife, though they had stood together before God's altar and taken their marriage vows.

CHAPTER XV.

NEWS FROM ENGLAND—BELLONA'S TRIBUTE.

IN 1675 Frances re-visited England after nine years' absence. She might be depended upon to spend no more money on her journey than she could help, and partly for that reason, partly to supply the vacant place in the Paris household, Cherry, a modest, discreet young woman of twenty-two, was left behind with the children. In triumphant proof of her good management, the Countess George paid nothing on her homeward route. She contrived that her small person, with her extensive luggage, should find accommodation in one of the coaches and waggons which

conveyed the English ambassador, my Lord Berkeley, his lady and suite, to the embassy at Paris. In their company Frances met an old acquaintance who had been a maid-of-honour at Whitehall when Countess George was in the same capacity at St. James's. This was the girl whose "white eyelashes," and still more the reproach dealt by her unaffected purity and goodness, had rendered her the butt of the wild set of which "la belle Jennings" had been one of the queens. Margaret Blague, the dear friend of John Evelyn and his wife, was now Margaret Godolphin, and held in great favour and esteem by my lady the ambassadress, so that it is to be trusted that Frances, who was always on the alert where her interest was concerned, discharged punctually her arrears of civility to the long-suffering maid-of-honour. It was of little consequence, save to Frances' conscience, for a sweet and virtuous soul was near the end of her earthly career. After giving birth to the child whose future she so tenderly anticipated in the touching letter preserved for the benefit of later generations, Mrs. Godolphin died the saint she had lived, deeply mourned by her husband, friends and servants.

Frances reappeared in her *hôtel* brimming over with news and tales of the changes which had come to pass in England, Whitehall, St. James's and Holywell since she had left them. For she had been to Holywell again. She had patched up her feud with her mother. Madam Jennings had been quite gracious to Countess George, who had not done badly for herself after all, while Madam had fresh grievances to complain of and struggle against, to which Squire Richard listened in silence, like the peaceable, incapable man he was. Sister Bab was married—no great marriage, Frances explained, putting up her lip—a Colonel Griffith, who had a little land in Hertfordshire, his commission, and a dim reflection of court patronage. But Bab was content, and her mother had never expected great things for her pale-faced, timid, home-loving daughter, who was her father's true child.

It was little Sal, grown a bouncing beauty of fifteen, who was threatening a second time to mar madam's worldly schemes. It was the most curious repetition of the old story. Sarah had succeeded Frances in the household of the Duchess of York at the early age of twelve, when her office was to serve as a bright, clever playmate for the slow, heavy Princess Anne. When Anne Hyde died and Mary of Modena came to fill her place, Sarah was still one of the household. Shortly afterwards Colonel John Churchill was appointed groom of the chamber to the Duke of York, as Dick Talbot had been at an earlier day. But Churchill's circumstances were more like those of George Hamilton than of Talbot. John Churchill, too, was a soldier of fortune, who had won distinction under Turenne, while "the handsome Englishman" was equally destitute of private means, unless what had come to

him from the discreditable gifts of the Duchess of Cleveland. Here was another daughter of Holywell about to sacrifice herself most unwarrantably to the grand passion. Frances entered with great spirit into the affair, and detailed candidly how the Churchill family were quite as unwilling that their son should throw himself away on Mrs. Sarah Jennings, as Madam Jennings was boiling over with ire because the last arrow in her quiver, the pride of her heart, was on the point of counting the world well lost for love.

Time works wonders, since Countess George, with daughters of her own, showed an inclination to side with her mother. Not that Frances was not prepared to grant that Colonel Churchill was a most proper man, brave, dignified, with a winning tongue for men, and especially for women of her stamp, to whom his evil reputation for gallantry only rendered him more irresistible. But then Sarah was a court beauty of the first water. "I vow her chestnut hair beats my lint top," cried Frances magnanimously. "Her cheeks are still more like roses. Her tongue, for mother-wit and decision of purpose, wags every other down. She and I would not agree for an hour, but that is because two of a trade cannot agree. She doth not think too little of herself, or too much of her humble servant, and she is as haughty and capricious a mistress as ever I did see. That is the way to make thyself valued, Cherry, when men are in question. Why, if you will believe me, she threatened to accompany me back here, and break off the connection, if he presumed on any encouragement she had ever given him. I know not how the matter will end."

Frances was full of the transformation all round in England, save, indeed, that his Majesty was as merry and good-for-nothing as ever, and the queen was as content and—vulgar, to tell the truth. There was Countess George's old mistress, who had survived her father my Lord Chancellor's disgrace, had professed herself a Catholic on her death-bed, while James had openly acknowledged himself of the faith. Where fair buxom Anne Hyde had presided in her thirties, slender dark-haired Mary of Modena was ruling in her teens. A third fragile baby Duke of Cambridge had been born to follow the two little dukes of the same name who had preceded him at St. James's. All the court and quality had been entertained by the Lord Mayor at Guildhall, where Madame Mazarine had taken precedence of the Duchess of Portsmouth. The most of Frances' old friends were altered like everything else: Dick Talbot was in Ireland with his die-away spouse, Mrs. Boynton—much cheer she would afford him, and a loose bridle-rein she would hold over Dick's excesses. Harry Jermyn? No. When Frances came to think of it, she had heard nought of Harry Jermyn. The court and the world had grown tired of the puppy's airs. Frances Stewart had run off with her cousin his Grace of Richmond, had lost her beauty and the use of one eye

through small-pox, without troubling her small mind much about her losses, and was already a widow of three years' standing. Mrs. Bagot had become Lady Falmouth. Sweetmeat-loving Mrs. Temple had captivated and married so grave a gentleman as my Lord Lyttelton. Even brown Mrs. Henrietta Price had wedded one Alexander Stanhope, Esquire, widower, of St. Paul's Churchyard, only a year ago, nine years after she and Frances had personated the pair of orange girls.

Countess George had looked up the Hills. "I declare, cousin, they're as poor as ever; how they've managed to scrape a living all these years I cannot guess. Sister Sarah hath got the promise of a page's place in some nobleman's family for one of the boys, and father hath got a pair of colours for another. The sickly little fellow is dead—nay, you need not begin to cry, sure it is no harm to him or any one else to count his death a good riddance. Alice is taller than you, and ready to marry if a man could be found to marry her. The very babe who was burnt out of Speedwell Lane with the rest of the tribe, is shot up into a chit not unlike what you were when Aunt Hill brought you to Holywell. I thought she favoured you at first, in being a quiet, helpful little maid; but I looked again and saw you were the real piece of goods and she was no more than the imitation. Mark me, yon Abigail Hill is a sly child, and she will grow up a sly woman as we may live to see."

There was another person, another Peter, by no means sickly in the days when Cherry knew him, of whom Frances at first said not a word, but she had always found difficulty in keeping her own counsel, and at last the truth would out. "Ain't you going to ask me if I've heard tidings of thy better, or as it happens in this case thy worse half, Mrs. Peter?" demanded Countess George meaningly and curiously, as the two sat together on the broad window-seat in one of the deep embrasures of their *hôtel* windows, Frances chattering, Cherry working with nervous diligence at her embroidery, and listening wistfully. "Well, thou art a cool, indifferent wife."

Cherry flushed painfully and hung her head, but said not a word.

"I suppose I must say my say, else I shall burst with holding my tongue. I made inquiries after Captain Thornhurst—he is a captain now—and I was told had not a bad character for standing by his guns and using his sword in the field. I was affrighted he would not come nigh me, so I took care that he should not escape. I engaged a lady, an old friend of mine and an acquaintance of his, to have him at her house to supper, and to be sure that the party should end in a promenade in Spring Gardens, where I was to join them. We ladies were all in masks, but my friend and I had appointed a rendezvous. She contented herself with mentioning me to him as a friend of hers, and I found an excuse for

taking his arm, without his having the least idea who was leading him into a side path. You uninquisitive little wretch," the speaker broke off with another fine show of impatience. "Don't you care to be told what your Peter is like?"

Cherry gave a gasp of distress like a creature at bay, and looked up desperately in her companion's face, but still said nothing.

"He is a great beef eater of a country squire rather than of a soldier," said Frances contemptuously, "for he's come to his kingdom, he has succeeded to his honoured uncle at Three Elms, though he still sticks to the soldiering. His face is like the full moon, or an over-blown rose. His teeth—you remember his big square teeth, and that you used to complain of their standing so far apart?—they might be made of the lining of orange peel, stuck in the vermilion mouth of such a false face as children wear at Christmas."

Cherry raised her head with a quick, proud, indignant movement. She was going to say, "Please let his looks alone, Cousin Frances; he cannot help them, they are as God made them, as there was every sign they would be when he was a boy. We have no right to find fault with them."

But Frances anticipated her. "Still he is your husband, cousin, and I ought to beg your pardon for speaking so free," she went on carelessly; "so far as manly height and breadth with an air of health and strength, and for that matter of honest living go, there is nought amiss with him. We are not all to look for Adonises and Apollos and stately Colonel Churchills. I have been clean spoilt by French graces. To make a long story short I took advantage of the occasion, and the moment we were out of sight and hearing of the others, I whipped off my mask and faced him. 'I have come here to meet you, Captain Thornhurst,' I said with all the composure in the world; 'what have you to say to me?' If he had been red before, he grew purple now, and he stared as if he could not believe his eyes and would not trust his ears. At last the gentleman found breath and voice to speak, though he nearly choked over the words still. 'I did not come here to meet you, Lady Hamilton, and I have nought to say to you. If you had been a man instead of a woman, it might have made an odds.' 'What!' I cried as I said to you a minute ago (upon my word you are a pretty pair!), 'do you not care to ask how your wife fares? Have you no message to send to Madam Thornhurst?' I gave you your title, for you are madam as certain as he is squire. 'I know of no such person, madam,' quoth my faithful husband, and now he spoke as icily as if his tongue were frozen in his mouth."

Cherry shivered and grew as white as if the cold hand of death had touched her.

"'There is such a person,' I told the liar roundly, 'and your denial will not unmake her. More than that, I can tell you she is

a very handsome, accomplished and admired person, and half of the fine gentlemen of Paris are at her feet.' I stretched a point there, Cherry," Frances stopped to nod, "though you have your admirers, and they would be many more if you were not so stiff and bashful. If you want a man to prize what he is throwing away, just you give him a hint that plenty of other men are after it and would give their lives to get it."

"Oh, cousin, how could you say that?" cried Cherry in horror. "It was bad enough not to let him alone, but to pretend that I—that I——" she stopped short in her agitation.

"That you forgot the ruddy, round-faced monster," suggested Frances scornfully. "I did it because I know best how to manage men. I can tell you his eyes flashed up, and he frowned as black as night at my words. He might have been the most attached husband—who would not consent to let his good wife be an hour out of his sight. There is no saying what I might have brought him to, if my Lady Bellasis and the rest of her company had not turned up when they were not wanted. Never heed, Cherry, I don't wish to get quit of you yet awhile, not till the little girls are grown. Lord, what should I do without you now? But wait till there is a Catholic king in England—one who knows what the Hamiltons suffered for their faith, and is ready and willing to make them amends, then my captain will pipe to a different tune, I promise you."

"Never, if I can help it," said Cherry desperately, but Frances paid no attention; having disburdened her wallet, she was off at a new tangent.

As it happened, it was Frances who had to pipe to a different tune. The tide of fortune was beginning to turn in the great Louis' ruthless warfare. During the year in which Countess George was in England, 1675, Marshal Turenne fell fighting on the banks of the Rhine, Count George witnessing the last moments of his chief, and bitterly lamenting him. In the following year, at Midsummer, 1676, it was the gallant Hamilton's turn to pay the dues of his calling. He was slain in a comparatively obscure battle at Zebernstiege, in Alsace, the greater part of his three regiments of *gens d'armes*, faithful to death, perishing with him. Frances with her children was left, according to the account of a contemporary, "inconsolable and ruined beyond redemption." The husband she had lost after eleven years of married life, could not have been more than thirty-three or thirty-four years of age, while she herself was a widow at twenty-eight.

(To be continued.)

SOCIAL ECHOES.

By MRS. HUMPHRY.

ENGLISHWOMEN and Americans very certainly bear away the palm of beauty in cold weather. During the nipping frosts and chill nor'-easters of early February, I had an opportunity of comparing a party of well-dressed, well-born women of several nationalities, under circumstances that led to the formation of the opinion expressed above. The German ladies kept their shoulders in their ears, and their noses were for the most part as red as their cheeks were pallid. The French women looked sallow and rather disagreeable. They never take much walking exercise, and consequently a cold wind holds them at its mercy. The English and Americans, on the contrary, were bright-eyed, pink-cheeked, and radiant in clear whiteness of brow, temple, chin and side-cheeks. They loosened their furs after the brisk walk in the keen air, while the Continental ladies from beyond the Channel nestled down into theirs in a helpless way. A very pretty German girl had been turned by the cold into a dull-eyed, blue-cheeked, white-lipped, unattractive being whom no one could connect with the charming individuality they had often seen in evening dress.

Australian women have good complexions, too. Or if not, as a rule, we have been exceptionally fortunate in the ladies the "coming country" has sent over here. A beautiful example of perfect American colouring may be found in a wealthy lady who is about to re-marry, after having been assigned by rumour's busy tongue to many different individuals, a duke or two among the rest. Her brilliant eyes, dark as her hair, contrast with a complexion as fair as any blonde's, and with a lovely touch of pink in either cheek. Another pretty American, also a brunette, is the wife of an Irishman well known on the London press and in the political arena. Her face has most harmonious movements in speech or laughter, and the soft eyes are as full of intelligence as they are of sweetness. The voice matches the eyes.

It is rather a misfortune to be sensitive to voices, especially just now when fashion rules that girls shall talk in strident tones and as loud as their condition of lung will permit. London is full of dreary noises, uttered through the medium of the human voice. Between the falsetto cry of the sweep in the morning and the hoarse duet of the men who invariably hunt in couples, shouting the news of the latest horrible murder, lest we should too cheerfully end the day, we hear many varied voices. Have we not

the vocal performances of the costermonger, the street-boy, the milkman—which latter is apparently more numerous than milk-consumers, for he is always to the fore from muddy morn to rainy eve—and the shrill cries of the tradesmen's boys, who carry on an endless conversazione in the streets? Even where we might confidently look for refinement of enunciation, we do not always find it. The clerical son of one of the greatest peers in England has a really terrible voice, and his pronunciation is of the most cockney description. Particularly noticeable is this in such words as "wives," "plight," "endow" and "allow," which this titled gentleman pronounces entirely after the fashion known in the environs of Bow bells—"waives," "pläight," "endaow," "allaow." To make matters worse, he almost deafens the happy pair whom he is uniting ("unaïting") by the roaring voice in which he conducts the service. He might consider that he is not marrying the entire congregation. It is difficult to keep from smiling when one hears him shout, in a voice that could be heard across the street: "Ai, So-and-so, take thee, Such-and-such." How different is the softly confidential fashion in which a certain popular clergyman smooths the threshold of matrimony for those he couples.

Perhaps it is in church that harsh and nasal voices disturb us most. We may be seated near people who run the psalms and hymns and responses through as with a coarse metal thread. It is difficult to analyse the feeling of irritation that is caused by such voices as these. One feels unamiably desirous that the loud singers shall be made aware that the emotions they excite are not of a favourable kind. Their braying drowns the soft, sweet voices near, and sets the listener's whole mind in revolt, just as the sound of snoring does. And yet the owners of the dreadful voices are unaware of any fault. They sing and speak as they have been taught, and this brings us to the practical point of the matter. It is a duty that every mother owes to society to do all she can to prevent her children speaking through their noses, or pronouncing vowels and combinations of vowels in a faulty way. To reduce the number of disagreeable voices in the world, by other than Herodian tactics, is a philanthropic act. As it is, very few children speak without a twang caught from their nurses and in some cases from their governesses and even from their parents. I know a very pretty woman whose corn-crake voice frightens away the admiration that every one must feel for her beautiful face. I know a very plain man—he has even been called ugly—whose voice is so thoroughly well-bred, whose enunciation is so perfect and intonation so musically mellow, that the delighted ear corrects the impression of the eye and pronounces him charming. Mothers! do not let your children twang! But few of you know how deep and subtle are the impressions conveyed through the voice. I have seen a man turn with a sudden look of pleasure on

his face at the sound of a girl's fresh, clear and sweet low voice. He had not thought the owner worth looking at twice, but he soon obtained an introduction to that delightful voice. To be perfect, there must be a natural organ of some sweetness, a delivery of sound through more direct and legitimate channels than the roundabout route *viâ* nose, a cultivated pronunciation and that peculiar and indescribable *timbre* that is supposed to denote good breeding, though it is occasionally dissociated from it.

The cockney twang was the only thing that spoiled those charming plays "Goody Two Shoes" and "Alice in Wonderland," now withdrawn owing to the action of the School Board. The "Babes in the Wood" are still left to us, however, and though their appearance is by no means such as we have associated, from childish years, with that of the poor little innocents, they are extremely amusing and not only set, but keep, the audience "on a roar."

Mr. Burnand's "Pickwick" at the Comedy Theatre, is an operetta play to be heard and seen, for the music is as charming as the dialogue and lyrics are funny, and Mr. Rutland Barrington as a baker, Miss Lottie Venne as the widow Bardell, and Mr. Arthur Cecil as Pickwick himself, must be seen to be appreciated.

Mr. Mansfield will produce "Richard III." at the Globe early in March, and we all want to see Miss Mary Rorke as Queen Elizabeth, though the uninterrupted gloom of the play is a trifle daunting to cheery souls. "That Doctor Cupid" is going merrily at the Vaudeville, being one of the funniest plays ever written. Mr. Thomas Thorne as Cupid has only to open his lips to send ripples of laughter all through the stalls, echoed by stentorian cachinnation from the pit, and re-echoed by shouts of mirth from the gallery and boxes.

Playgoers who like a deep interest in the pieces they see will all go to the Court to see Mr. and Mrs. Kendal in Mr. Pinero's "Weaker Sex," never before acted in London, but produced with great success in Manchester. Mr. Sidney Grundy's new play "The White Lie" will also be given during the engagement of the Kendals at the Court Theatre, where popular Mrs. John Wood now reigns supreme.

A complimentary matinée performance is to be given at the Gaiety Theatre on the 4th of March to signalize the completion of Herr Meyer Lutz' twentieth year of musical directorship of that theatre. Lord Londesborough is president of the influential committee who have undertaken the necessary arrangements, and Mr. Alfred de Rothschild is vice-president.

With a passing mention of the very great success that has attended the production of "Still Waters Run Deep" at the Criterion, in which Mrs. Bernard-Beere wears such marvellous gowns, I may conclude my fugitive notes on current dramatic events.

LONDON SOCIETY.

APRIL, 1889.

“SHEBA.”

A STUDY OF GIRLHOOD.

By “RITA,”

AUTHOR OF “DAME DURDEN,” “DARBY AND JOAN,” “THE LADY NANCY,”
“GRETCHEN,” ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE UNWISDOM OF THOUGHT.

THE opera was over late that night, and Meredith returned somewhat fatigued; Müller had not waited for him, and he found him on his return smoking and busied with those eternal MSS. that were one day to startle the world of music into recognition of an entirely original genius.

He looked up as the young man entered. “Tired?” he said. “Ah, I see—you need not speak. There is your supper there. The child put it all right for you . . . and there is the wine . . . our good friend Niersteiner; he will rouse your spirits.”

Meredith threw himself into the chair placed carefully beside the little table on which his evening meal was laid out—but though he drank off a glass of the clear golden wine, he ate nothing.

“*Was ist?*” asked the old German presently; “you are not yourself, *mein lieber*.”

“I am only tired,” said Paul; “the music is ringing in my head. Somehow, whenever I sing ‘The Prophet’ I think of Sheba Ormatroyd.”

“It is not wise to think of any woman twice,” said old Müller, glancing up from those lines of notes. “For why? You think twice, and if you think twice you think again—and the oftener you think, the worse it is for you. That is so—*nicht wahr?*”

“I suppose it is,” the young man answered wearily. “Was she here to-day?”

"Of course . . . the rain kept her from her walk, so she sat here with me and we talked."

"I suppose," said Paul, "you mean you talked, and she listened."

"She is a good listener," said Müller smiling. "I am afraid I frightened her a little. She will have much to think of—but then, her mind is active—she *can* think."

"I hope," said Paul, looking at him suddenly, "you have not been mystifying and perplexing her brains as you used to do mine."

"I have given her an opportunity of using them on a new subject. What will result I cannot presume to say . . . there are some wise folks in the world, you know, who have deemed it is best for man to accept what his reason cannot explain, lest his mind, being exercised, should lead him astray. Truth should always be veiled, because mortal eyes cannot bear its glory. The mind should not question or doubt, because both are sinful and may end in complete confusion. Yea, even the very questioning of that Beginning which has been so satisfactorily established, and that Being who has been filtered through the mind and imaginings of man until His likeness is lost in a weak conception, based on superstition and childish belief, is not permissible."

"Did you tell her this?" asked Paul, growing interested despite his weariness.

"Yes—something of the sort. Oh, to see her face pale, and her big serious eyes dilate! . . . I wish I could read that girl's future. She is in wrong hands altogether. She wants different training."

"*Natürlich*," said Paul with a faint smile. "They all do . . . Yours, for instance. I often wonder you have never established a school of female philosophers; what a revolution it would make."

"I would do it if I knew many girls like Sheba Ormatroyd," said the old man puffing huge volumes of smoke out of the big pipe. "She has thought much. She went straight to the root of the matter—the duality of good and evil . . . She thinks man was created as an experiment—but of course she holds the usual ideas imbibed at our mother's knees in infancy—one life, right or wrong—happy or wretched—and then a long night of waiting and a day of judgment; the fact of being Christian by virtue of baptism, no matter what the after life may be—the trusting to priestly explanation of Scripture and abiding by the strict letter of a text."

He pushed his papers aside and came over to the fireplace.

"I verily believe," he said, "that you vainglorious English fancy *your* Bible, as you call it, was inspired direct of Heaven in your own polyglot language, and dropped from thence ready

bound into your pulpits, and churches. You talk as if such were the case Oh! for the day that I see coming—the day when truth shall be heard through the length and breadth of the earth, and that foolish dead-letter *idolatry* abolished; when man shall see for himself that he holds the Divine Immortal Spirit in his own soul, and shall live by that light, and work for its purposes instead of throwing the whole onus of his future on the shoulders of his fellow-man and the traditions of a bigoted faith!"

"That day is very far off, I should think," remarked Paul. "It won't be in our time, my good friend, or our children's either for that matter. You can't root up some hundreds of different sects and set them all to accept one law and one faith, and you will never get any member of the English Church to acknowledge that a *gnostic* and an *agnostic* are not one and the same thing, or that both are not—atheists. The idea of any one calling that 'Unknowable,' of whose Person and Nature they are quite confident, and on whose imaginary benevolence they firmly rest all their hopes of the future! It seems to them preposterous. It is a curious fact that the aggregate portion of humanity prefers to have its religion done for it."

"It is no more curious," said Müller, "than to note the number of reasonable beings who never give themselves the trouble to think of any religion at all—anything beyond frivolity and pleasure-seeking and merry-making! Living their earth life with no higher desires and ambitions than these, they yet expect to go straight into some glorified state of being they call 'Heaven,' when that earth life is over. Poor fools—for them the hour of death will be indeed the hour of revelation! Think of sectarian prejudices—of narrow beliefs—of fragments of splintered truth grasped in trembling hands and held out as a passport; of all the useless lip-service—all the empty forms—all that the outward life has practised and to which the soul gives the lie! Picture to yourself this crowd of shivering spirits standing at the portals of the vast Beyond—the picture is appalling Here stands one clamouring, 'I was baptized into Thy Church, oh Lord; therefore am I saved.'—Here another, 'I have never missed early celebration—I have partaken of Thy own Flesh and Blood, and believed in the real presence—surely I am saved.' Here yet another, 'My righteousness is as filthy rags; still I have built a church and sent out missionaries to the heathen, and given to all charities and godly institutes of my own sect—surely I am saved.'" Then he laughed grimly, "And you and I, Paul—who have gone deeper into the matter and see the errors of others so plainly, what shall we say for ourselves that is wiser or better than this—eh?"

"God knows," said the young man drearily. "It is the old cry, you know, Müller. 'Ye remove our landmarks, give us others

that are better ye take away our foothold—what have ye surer or safer in its place?"

"There is nothing *sure* or *safe* to be learnt or to be found," said Müller more seriously than he had yet spoken; "not in this world—for this world is only a novitiate, a preparation—the human mind is not capable of comprehending the Infinite, or bringing the Person or Essence of a Being such as the Creator of the Universe, into the narrow scope of human words as explanation. Language cannot convey to us the real nature of God—and man, since the infancy of thought, has, therefore, committed the folly of bringing Him into human conception by dowering Him with human attributes on a somewhat larger scale. The machine made by a human brain and evolved from human consciousness may be absolutely perfect as far as its power, its use, and its mechanism, yet that machine cannot comprehend *its own use*, or the nature of its maker. Why not so with man and his Creator? He knows he *is*, and that he has a life to live and duties to perform while that life is conscious, but he is not intended to know more here—in the earth life. He is not *capable* of knowing more, though his vanity will not allow him to believe so. Ah! if the arrogant divines who fill Christian pulpits and have done so much to bind the eyes and destroy the judgment of men, would only preach of their own ignorance and limited powers of research, they could at least help instead of hinder those who seek the great truths of the Hereafter."

"Always a slap at the pulpit, Müller," said the young man smiling. "Even philosophy has not taught you to regard that institution calmly and forbearingly."

"No!" said the old German roughly, "it has not—because it is my natural enemy, because it substitutes bombast, abstractions, and fanciful imagery for the truth; because it upholds the littleness of man to be all-important, because it is arrogant and vain-glorious and would only allow man to know God through itself if it could; thank science and human reason that it can't do so any longer. Most priests speak of man as if the whole universe had been created for him instead of his being only a small fragment of its vast plan—the last work of the Creator, not the first, and the most refractory and troublesome of all!"

"All animal life is selfish and egotistic," said Paul musingly. "Each of us wants his own desires gratified, his own comforts supplied; indeed for what else are we in a material world at all?"

"For its use and purpose, perhaps, not for our own," said Müller. "Certainly the material world gets the best of it—it has all man's skill, power and invention spent endlessly on itself, and gives him nothing for which he does not labour. Yes, it gives him death . . . death in a hundred shapes and forms which he must combat as best he may. There is a popular cant which

calls Nature 'our kind mother.' Now that is just one of those things men say and repeat to each other without thinking of the real meaning."

"What is Nature, then?" asked Paul. "You generally take the opposite side of an established belief."

"The kindness of Nature should *not* be an established belief," cried the old man wrathfully. "Think it out for a moment—she yields beauty to the earth and scatters plagues and pestilence in the same spot; she gives abominable climates to the countries where the largest amount of human life is propagated; or if temperature and climate are genial and beneficial they are counterbalanced by tortures of insects and reptiles, and perils of savage foes and furious animals. Disorder, destruction, sickness and danger are all her children, her favourite children, one would say, seeing that each and all of these are foes to the human race. Man is brought into the world, not to find her forces at his service, but that he may wage perpetual warfare against them. Hurricanes and earthquakes destroy his handiwork with absolutely brutal disregard to the skill and toil spent in that labour. The sea is a deadly foe, the sky scatters hail and rain, the air whirlwinds and tempests. The apparent insignificance of insect life can be turned into a devastating army; at every turn and from every sentient thing we meet with danger or opposition. And this is your kind Nature, your beneficent mother! *Ach, lieber Himmel*, the senselessness and idiocy of it all!"

"Oh, Müller, Müller," laughed the young singer in mock despair, "have you a good word for nothing? Do you condemn earth and Heaven, God and man, faith and unfaith, good and evil alike with scathing philosophy?"

"I come of a race that thinks," answered the old man quietly, "and accept not hearsay and tradition to save a little trouble to their own brains. Now *your* countrymen like their thinking done for them, while they grub for gold, or smoke in their offices, or read their newspapers, or nurse their babies; their only virtues are *domestic*—*ja!* a land of wife-beaters, of drunkards, of mammon-worshippers—and—yes, all that is to their credit—of church builders! A land of magnificent hypocrites and incredible dullards! Sum up all their virtues in that one word, *domestic*. They are 'stay-at-home,' they pay their taxes, they reverence rank and royalty, they worship wealth, they support their families, and they go regularly to their parish church. Ah, my Paul, and they expect all the world to look on and say with admiring breath, 'Surely of such is the kingdom of Heaven!' When I write a History of Nations——"

But Paul laughed outright. "Another history," he said; "how many does that make, *lieber Freund*?"

He rose from his seat and went over to the old German and laid his hand on his shoulder.

"To hear you talk," he said, "one would imagine you had not a kind feeling for any of your race. Fortunately I know better. Your heart is as sympathetic as it is big and generous—it is only your brain that is cynical and pessimistic. And now I'm not going to listen to you any more to-night. You had better sit up and try your hand at one of those wonderful histories that, like the blessings of man, never *are*, but always are 'to be.' Seriously, Müller, if you don't make haste and write *one*, at least, you will find that the time allotted for your natural existence has gone by, unless, of course, you mean to return again to the earth plane; but as you cannot choose your personality, you may find your soul in the body of one of your enemies the priests at your next incarnation."

Müller laughed too as he rose and laid aside his pipe and shook himself like a great rough bear.

"Maybe," he said, "but he would be a priest of a new order and persuasion if he had my soul within him. As for the histories—perhaps I am only waiting to know if it will be a waste or a gain of time and thought to write them, before I commence to do so. And now good-night, you need some sleep, or you will be fit for nothing to-morrow."

"Good-night," said Paul; "if you have succeeded in making Sheba Ormatroyd only half as uncomfortable as you have made me, you may go to sleep with a quiet conscience. Rest assured neither of us can ever again be satisfied with *living* life, and not thinking of its real purport."

"Better pain than sloth," said Müller fiercely; "better doubt than blindness; better shame than self-satisfaction! The torpor of even the thinking portion of the civilized world is appalling with regard to intellectual culture and spiritual advance. What can one say of the *non-thinking*? As beasts ye live, and eat, and sleep, and devour one another. . . . As beasts ye deserve to die!"

CHAPTER XXX.

SHEBA RECEIVES A GIFT.

SINCE Sheba had entered on her career of independence she had been completely ostracized from her home circle. She never dined with them now, taking her own simple meal at mid-day at a confectioner's shop in George Street, and having merely some tea in the library or her own room when she returned home. This special evening, however, as she entered her room, she found a note pinned to a large parcel that was lying on her bed. She saw it was in her mother's handwriting, and somewhat surprised, she opened it.

It began almost affectionately: "Dear Child,—Let us bury these unhappy differences. We will say no more about your foolish whim. Put on this pretty frock, and come down to dinner at seven as usual, if only to please your poor unhappy mother. You will find two old friends here."

The blood flushed to the girl's face; her heart swelled and softened. Had she misjudged her mother after all? Was she unhappy despite her luxurious life, and did she love her a little, despite their many differences of opinion? The quick tears dropped on those pencilled lines; she felt how lonely her life had been of late, and that it was a welcome relief to hear the unhappy quarrels were to be buried. It was characteristic of her to think far more of the note and its kind words, than of the accompanying present; characteristic, too, that instead of looking at it, she should seat herself by the bed and allow her thoughts to wander off into all sorts of extraordinary channels, all of them flowing to or from the fount of that curious intellect which had to-day been unsealed for her edification.

The old German had aptly described himself as a "broom," a great rough broom, but Sheba's mind had not been such a simple ungarnished chamber as he supposed. On the contrary, ever since she could think or reason at all, religious speculations had dominated every other. The world beyond was far oftener in her thoughts than the world of the present, though it was not the sort of world presented by ordinary creeds and doctrines—a vague, mysterious, unaccountable place, where winged beings floated to and fro on mystic errands of doubtful utility, and whose leisure time was spent in harping hymns and, to quote Franz Müller again, "in eternal adoration of some vaguely defined glory."

As a child she had wondered what pleasure such an existence would have for unmusical people, or specially active minds to whom quiescence meant only stagnation. She had been told it was impious and sinful to question such matters, and referred to the Book of Revelation, which, after reading, she had likened to an impossible fairy tale.

Now, however, all these speculations, all these inexplicable mysteries seemed to crowd back, and weigh on her brain even more heavily than of yore.

She had been prepared to hear of faulty teaching, of errors mixed with truth, as chaff with grain; of the inutility of creeds, and forms, and doctrines, on which the ordinary disciples of Christianity laid such stress; but she had not been prepared to hear that the idea of one Heaven and one earth for man might be altogether erroneous; that hell, as a *place*, had no existence; that there was a conception of Nature, and of the origin and destiny of human life, differing entirely from any preconceived or theological idea which had ever been presented to her.

To trace the beginning of all things back, infinitely further

than that unsatisfactory phrase of the First Chapter of Genesis, was in itself astounding; but to hear that a race was in existence who knew infinitely more about the *science* of spiritual things than any books recorded, and to be suddenly presented with a view of Nature and man, such as her wildest dreams had never approached, this was what had so overpowered her mind and paralyzed its usual activity.

She sat there on a low chair by the bed with that little note utterly forgotten, and the parcel to which it attracted her notice still unopened. She thought of Noel Hill. How good he was, how simple, how earnest; but was he blinded by that array of long-received and accepted doctrines, with which the Church bandages the eyes of its servants, and bars the way to its own more rational enlightenment?

She had read over every portion of the orthodox Church-service, from the Preface to the Thirty-nine Articles, and arriving at the last-named portion, had marvelled how any man could conscientiously vow to accept, maintain and believe them. As for the Athanasian Creed, even Noel Hill had declined to discuss *that*. Not many weeks back it had been read out in church, and she had shocked her mother afterwards by saying that if the so-called saint had intended it as an explanation, his intellect had proved itself signally incapable of the task he had undertaken.

Mrs. Levison had never even attempted to understand it; she did not think it necessary, being one of that contented class of persons who are satisfied that wiser minds have arranged these matters for them, and that their part of Christian duty is simply to say "Amen" to the statements they hear from altar, or pulpit.

Poor Sheba. Her brain ached; her heart was heavy. The old footholds seemed slipping further and further away. She felt as one who wades through deep waters, and finds that at every step the dark swift current sweeps higher and higher, till breath is suspended, and every advance threatens destruction.

Half unconsciously she sank on her knees in the gathering darkness, and her heart cried out faintly and feebly for an aid that she told herself was fast becoming problematical.

"Oh, God! if indeed there be a God whom the prayers of mortals can reach, help me now. Show me Thyself . . . ere it is too late."

Those last words fell like a whisper through the falling dusk, and she shuddered at her own temerity even as they left her lips.

For an instant she raised her head; her eyes strained upwards. All was silence. Night fell like a veil over the external world, and, alas! alas! a darker and more terrible veil seemed to descend and enfold that kneeling figure, for whom, as for thousands and thousands of others, the first touch of doubt seemed as an earth-

quake's shock, shivering every pre-conceived faith into a myriad fragments, opening wide an insatiable abyss, into which fell all that had hitherto meant safety, and shelter, and life!

* * * * *

The door opened suddenly. A little figure gorgeous as a butterfly stood there, and tried to pierce the gloom by the aid of the lights in the passage.

A little shrill voice echoed wonderingly through the room :

"Sheba, Sheba! Good gracious; what are you saying your prayers for at this time? Surely you're not going to bed! And your dress—why, you haven't even looked at it. Aren't you going to put it on?"

Sheba rose from her knees, dazed and bewildered.

The child flitted about, lighting the candles, tugging at the string of the parcel, chattering all the time as incessantly as a little brook flowing over its stony pebbles.

"Mamma is so anxious you should look nice, and this gown is lovely. I went with her to buy it, and she had it made by your own old Toinette. I should have been jealous only I had a new one too, and you are to wear crimson roses with it. Oh, Sheba; why don't you wake up? Why, in a quarter-of-an-hour they will be all here—your great friend Bessie Saxton, and the young clergyman, and a strange foreign gentleman just come over from England—such a swell; mamma is quite excited about him. He has a title; the Count de Phalamong, I think that's his name. Oh, dear; if I were only as old as you, and could go down to dinner!"

Sheba roused herself with an effort. "Did you say Bessie Saxton was coming?" she asked, rapidly unfastening her dress and walking over to the toilet-table.

"Yes," cried Dolly, who had by this time cut the string, and now was flinging aside folds of paper until at last the new gown itself was revealed, and laid down on the bed with almost reverential touch. "You had better make haste," she went on. "Shall I ask Martha to come and help you? She dressed me in half-an-hour."

"No," said Sheba shortly. "I never want help, as you know. I was not brought up to be useless. Fifteen minutes is plenty of time even to get into a new gown."

"You *are* funny," said Dolly, surveying her, as she dashed cold water over her face and shoulders. "Fancy not caring how you look, or what you put on! What a splendid colour that cold water gives you. I never dare wash in cold water. I have such a delicate skin, and I want to take care of my complexion, for when I grow up—Oh! why don't you leave your hair like that? it suits you rough and loose. There now; you've spoilt it. Give your head a shake—so. Don't you see the difference that loose

wave makes dropping forward? If I had hair like yours I should spend hours trying to find what style suited me best. What, changed your petticoats—and ready for your dress! Gracious! how quick you are."

Sheba had paid very little attention to this string of remarks; now she walked over to the bed for her dress, and for a moment stood looking at it in astonishment.

"Isn't it lovely? I said so," chirruped Dolly at her ear. "Such soft, rich silk, and no fear of creasing it, and such a lovely colour, and hasn't Toinette made it your way—just as if you had told her, and only two days to do it in!"

Sheba took up the gown, almost fearful of its *delicate beauty*. It was of a thick, very soft silk, of a lovely pale shade of yellow—the very shade for her *brunette colouring*; and it was made somewhat in the fashion of her usual gowns, draped from the shoulders to the hem, and confined merely by a broad silver girdle at the waist.

With her magnificent hair coiled high on the small shapely head, and that lovely flush of feverish excitement still burning on either cheek and lighting the great sombre eyes, Sheba looked like a picture of some Eastern queen, and as Dolly watched that slender figure with its free, graceful movements, she felt almost inclined to forswear crinoline and flounces herself.

Just as Sheba was fastening the rich soft folds, the door again opened, and her mother entered. In her hand she held a bunch of crimson roses just gathered from the conservatory. She almost started when she saw the transformation in her daughter, and the simple elegance of the young slight figure, that put her own gorgeous *toilette* completely in the shade.

"Why, Sheba!" she exclaimed in surprise; "I shouldn't have known you. What wonders dress can work!"

"Thank you so much for it, dear mother," said the girl timidly, coming near the violet silk and yellow roses, and bending to touch her mother's cheek.

Mrs. Levison drew hastily back, with a vivid remembrance of pistachio-nut powder lavishly and recently employed.

"Yes, yes, my dear; I quite understand," she said hurriedly. "And I am very glad you are going to be sensible again. Family quarrels are hateful, and what would the Saxtons think not to see you at dinner? By-the-by, it is just upon seven. Here, take your roses; I must be off to the drawing-room, and don't be long coming down. I thought you would have been dressed by this time."

"I think," said Miss Dolly pertly, "she was asking a blessing on her new frock. I found her praying beside it. Fancy saying prayers except at bed-time. I wouldn't: it's bother enough then. But Sheba *is* so funny!"

Mrs. Levison left the room hurriedly without further observa-

tion. It didn't matter to her if Sheba prayed a dozen times a day as long as she had for once dressed herself decently, and seemed prepared to be amiable.

"She looks positively pretty," she said to herself with more of surprise than pleasure. "I couldn't have believed it. Will she make an impression, I wonder?"

Just as she reached the drawing-room, Bessie and Mr. Saxton arrived, and Noel Hill followed almost directly. Mrs. Levison noticed his glance wander round the room.

"My daughter will be here presently," she said, as she eagerly took in every detail of Bessie's *toilette*, and wondered whether, after all, she had done well in keeping Sheba's costume to her own peculiar style, instead of modernizing it. For Miss Saxton was as complete an epitome of a fashion plate as woman's heart could desire. Her fair hair was *crêped* and turned into a pyramid; her gown was a miracle of flounces and lace, with little knots of flowers dropped cunningly amongst its many folds. It was also cut low in the neck, displaying a well-shaped bust and throat, and full white arms, and altogether producing a result that must have been satisfactory to any woman's mind who studied fashion more than ease, or grace, or originality.

In a few moments more the host bustled in, fussy and important, and vulgar as ever. Then came a loud peal at the bell, a nervous convulsion on the part of Mrs. Levison, and almost immediately the door opened, and the servant announced somewhat huskily, as became one unused to the enunciation of titles, and especially of foreign titles:

"The Count de Pharamong!"

Mrs. Levison was gracious—and she flattered herself stately—in her welcome. Her husband was, however, too sensible of the honour of entertaining a title at his own "mahogany," as he delicately put it, to be altogether at his ease. He used "Mossoo le Count" at every possible opportunity, and never left the unfortunate guest a moment's repose—talking to him, or at him, in a breathless, incessant fashion that irritated even his well-bred composure.

It nearly drove Bessie Saxton wild, she having decreed that the illustrious foreigner was to fall captive to her bow and spear, and not relishing Mr. Levison's interference with her "soft eyes and low replies."

As for Count Pharamond himself, he was inwardly summing up host and hostess and guests with an accuracy that did him infinite credit, when the door was quietly opened and he saw standing there a vision that fairly astounded even his beauty-sated eyes. Eagerly he watched the stately young form coming forward with so serene a grace, and muttered below his breath:

"*Dieu!* She is worthy of Paris!"

To associate her with his host or hostess seemed such an incon-

gruity that he was conscious of a feeling nearly approaching disgust, when Mr. Levison said loudly and brusquely :

"Here, Sheba, I want to introduce you. My friend, Monsieur le Count de Pharamond—my daughter, or should I say, my step-daughter—Miss Ormatroyd."

Sheba bowed. Her eyes, grave and questioning as a child's newly roused from sleep, gazed quietly up at the strange and singularly handsome face bent almost reverentially before her. Then she passed on, and greeted Bessie and Noël Hill, both of whom were equally amazed at her changed appearance.

She had only time to say a few words—no time at all to notice Bessie's curious look and somewhat acrimonious greeting: "Well, Sheba! you *are* transformed"—when dinner was announced, and she found herself following her mother and the illustrious guest, on the arm of Noel Hill.

CHAPTER XXXI.

EXCHANGED CONFIDENCES.

"I **BEGAN** to despair of ever seeing you again," began Noel Hill to his companion as they seated themselves at the flower-decked table. "I have called several times; you were always out."

"I am out every day till five o'clock," said Sheba. "You know I have a teaching engagement?"

"Yes," he said, "I know;" thinking how incongruous seemed the association of a daily governess' life, with this stately young goddess.

"Do you like your new duties?" he asked presently.

"Very much," said Sheba, while a quick, bright blush rose to her cheek, and for a moment her whole face grew sweet and soft and tender, as a face grows at some pleasant memory.

Noel Hill noticed the change and wondered as to its cause. He had heard also of the queer old man, the Wandering Jew, who was Sheba's employer—surely there could be no great charm about him to raise that flush and glow of feeling. The count, watching her also from his side of the table, felt an odd, jealous pang at sight of that lovely blush. He attributed it to something her companion had said, and wondered what it could have been.

Bessie noticed it too, and whispered audibly to her host, by whose side she was seated: "How Sheba does flirt, to be sure!" and all the time Sheba was unconscious of notice or remark, and only saw before her that face of her "Prophet," and seemed to hear again his matchless melody of voice.

The dinner went on with its wearisome round of courses and sparkling wines, about each of which Mr. Levison had something to say and boast.

"You see, Monsieur le Count, the colonies aren't so bad, after all, eh?" And the polite Frenchman, who spoke English beautifully, would bow and smile, and say he was indeed too enchanted with such magnificent hospitality.

Sheba's head ached with the lights, and clatter of tongues, and she leant back in her chair and wondered whenever her mother intended to give the signal to leave the room.

At last Mrs. Levison rose—Count Pharamond, being nearest the door, held it open as the ladies passed through. Sheba was last, and as she moved along one of the crimson roses at her waist fell to the ground. The count stooped hurriedly and picked it up, at the same time he gave one long eager look into the beautiful grave eyes that met his own. Sheba had never met such a look, and the quick blood rushed to her brow as she held out her hand for the flower.

"Nay, mademoiselle," he said in a low voice. "Let me keep it, I pray," and he placed it in his coat without waiting for a reply. Sheba felt terribly embarrassed. She was totally unused to language of compliment, or acts of gallantry. Would it be rude to refuse, she wondered; then seeing that the rose had been taken possession of she deemed it best to say nothing, so she only gave the Frenchman a little cold bow, and hurried on to join her mother and Bessie Saxton.

It happened that that astute young lady had just glanced back to see what was detaining her friend, and the little episode of the dropped rose had not escaped her.

"Well," she said, as they entered the brilliantly-lighted drawing-room, "you *are* getting on I must say. I should keep to one at a time if I were you. Don't you know the proverb about two stools?"

"I don't know what you mean," said Sheba quietly.

Bessie Saxton laughed—it was not a pleasant laugh. "Don't you," she said. "How very innocent you have become. However, don't let us quarrel; I want to have a long chat with you. Sit down here," and she drew a low-cushioned chair beside her own. "Now tell me all you have been doing since you came to Sydney. But first, how do you like my dress?"

Sheba looked at it, or rather at where it ought to have been, and coloured warmly. "Doesn't it show too much—anatomy?" she said at last.

Bessie's cold blue eyes flashed angrily. "What a little idiot you are! What's the use of having a good neck and arms if one muffles them up as you do? But then of course you're thin!"

"I think," said Sheba in her old direct fashion, "that if I were fat, I should cover myself more."

"Why don't you say at once I look indecent?" snapped Bessie. "I hate hints."

"You asked me what I thought of you——"

"No, what you thought of my dress?"

"Oh, that's very pretty," said Sheba, "for the style of dress. But you know I have a horror of flounces and bustles. If you had ever studied the art drawings——"

"Oh! you little Puritan, do shut up!" snapped Miss Saxton with the pardonable vulgarity of friendship. "Why don't you make your mother wear high dresses? I'm sure she's old enough."

"She has her husband to advise her," said Sheba gravely. "Of course if he doesn't object, it is no business of mine."

"You don't seem to have altered much in mind or disposition," said Bessie, regarding her curiously, "though you're certainly grown out of all knowledge. But now tell me, who is this Count Pharamond?"

"I don't know," said Sheba; "I never heard of his existence till I came into the drawing-room."

"That wasn't a bad *coup* of yours," sneered her friend—"coming in just when we were all assembled. I suppose you thought you'd make a sensation?"

"I am sorry I was late," Sheba answered, with serene unconsciousness of a hidden meaning. "I had only a quarter of an hour to dress in."

"You managed to do it very successfully," said Bessie, regarding her almost enviously. "Whose idea was it to have your gown made like that?"

"My own," said Sheba. "All my dresses are made so. But mother ordered this as a surprise; I never saw it till I put it on."

"It's effective," allowed Miss Saxton reluctantly. "But it would not suit everybody. You're such an odd-looking girl; perhaps you are sensible to adopt a style of your own, though it's rather—rather a strong-minded thing to do."

"Is it?" questioned Sheba. "I never thought about it in that way; I was looking over some volumes of art prints in the library and I saw this style, and having found a little French dressmaker in the town who was very poor and very clever, I got her to modernize the idea, and if you only felt the comfort——"

"Oh, fancy thinking of comfort before fashion!" exclaimed Bessie. "Besides it would never suit me. You don't wear corsets, do you?"

"Oh yes," said Sheba. "But not those stiff hard steel and whalebone things you see in the shops. Toinette—that is the little Frenchwoman—makes them for me. They are quite soft and pliable, and you can move any way with them; as for waist, you know I never did care about that."

"Mine," said Miss Saxton with pardonable pride, "is only nineteen inches; yours looks about twenty-five."

"Probably," said Sheba, "it is. I never measured it. Yours is all wrong, though—quite out of proportion to the width of your shoulders. You will suffer for it some day."

"Really," said Miss Saxton, "I must say you talk the most insufferable nonsense! One would think you were studying for a doctor. I wish the men would come in. Now, when they do, pray content yourself with Noel Hill, and leave the Frenchman to me."

"Certainly," said Sheba laughing. "I haven't the slightest wish to monopolize him. I don't like him. I don't like the way he looks into one's eyes; it is so bold, so rude."

"Phooh! it is only a way all Frenchmen have," interrupted Bessie. "There comes in your prudery again. You'll never get married with such ideas as those."

"I don't wish to get married," said Sheba reddening.

"My dear, that is nonsense," laughed her friend. "It sounds as if—well, as if the grapes were sour. There's nothing more hateful in life than an old maid."

"Why should they be hateful?" asked Sheba, looking with her large serious eyes straight into her friend's face.

That look somewhat dismayed Bessie. "Really," she thought, "she *is* getting handsome—in a peculiar style; I don't think it is a style that *takes*. Still one never knows."

Aloud she said, "You are just as bad as ever, wanting to know the reason of everything. It bores people to have to explain. If you carry that habit with you into society, you will make more enemies than friends."

"I'm sure I do not care," said Sheba quietly. "I shall never live or act by rules laid down for me. Every one ought to think for themselves, and not accept everything the world teaches, merely because it *is* the world's teaching."

"Gracious!" exclaimed Bessie in wonderment, "who's teaching you philosophy? That old Wandering Jew, as your mother calls him, whose child you educate?"

"Old—Wandering—Jew!" echoed Sheba in amazement. "The father of my little pupil is not old; he is quite young, in fact. He is the singer at the Opera who has taken Rialo's part. You know Rialo, the great tenor, who is not expected to live."

"What!" almost shouted Bessie. "That splendid-looking man who did the 'Prophet' last night? Paoletti, I think, was his name. Well, you *have* kept it dark. Your mother doesn't know a word about it; she thinks it is that old German curiosity whose child you teach. Heavens! what a piece of luck. I'm dying to know him. You must introduce me. What's his real name?"

"Meredith," said Sheba, "Paul Meredith. The old German is a friend who lives with him." She spoke coldly and constrainedly. Bessie's tone and words jarred on her ear, and on that sensitive reverence she had for the wonderful singer, whose advent had been the great event of her life.

"Paul Meredith," echoed Bessie. "Well, only to think of your knowing him, and I've been crazy about the man ever since I

heard him at the Opera. You must get your mother to ask him here, and I'll come. I'd like to know what he is in private life. These public characters are sometimes awfully disappointing."

Sheba rose from her chair. Her face looked cold and disturbed. "I don't think he would come here," she said.

"Not come?" echoed Miss Saxton contemptuously. "You give him the chance, and see. If he refuses, ask your step-father to engage him to sing one evening. He's rich enough."

"What's that about papa being rich enough?" said a sharp little voice at her elbow. "I know he's rich—almost the richest man in all Sydney. He's going into Parliament soon." It was Miss Dolly, who had entered hanging on to Mrs. Levison, who had vainly endeavoured to keep her out of the drawing-room.

Bessie looked at the little flounced, dressed-up figure. "Oh, it's you, is it?" she said. ("Little horror!" she added, below her breath. "There'll be no peace now.")

"You've got a new dress on," began the little tormentor. "I don't think it's pretty, and it's cut awfully low; it's worse than mamma's, and hers is bad enough. I am sure if you asked the gentlemen they'd say you were both very rude."

"Dolly," interposed Mrs. Levison sharply, "be quiet. How dare you say such things."

"Sheba told me always to speak the truth," said the little incorrigible, "and so I am speaking it. Your dresses——"

"I will send you out of the room if you don't hold your tongue," said her step-mother.

"I'll ask papa if I may come back," said Miss Dolly coolly, "and he's sure to let me. He's always good-tempered after a lot of wine."

Bessie Saxon laughed outright, despite her vexation.

Dolly was a little horror when her remarks became personal, but she really was awfully amusing.

"If our dresses don't please you," she said, "what do you think of Sheba's?"

"Oh! Sheba will never look like any one else," said the child. "She is like one of those pictures in the church windows—Vashti, isn't it, or Esther—one of them, I know. Papa says she is a great deal more Jewish-looking than I am, and she won't wear so well; she is too dark. Why don't the gentlemen come in? What a time they are. I want to see the foreign count. What is he like? He is rich; oh! so rich. Mamma said what an admirable thing it would be for Sheba, if only he would take a fancy to her."

"Dolly!" almost screamed Mrs. Levison. "Will you be quiet!"

Sheba turned her face, pale and proud enough now, to her mother. She did not say anything, but a sharp pang of humiliation rent her heart.

So it was for this the feud had been patched up, the sceptre of peace extended. For *this* the affectionate note, the costly dress, had been sent to her. That she might find favour in the eyes of this rich stranger with the bold, watchful eyes; might make a good impression on him, so far as appearances went; be used as a bait to lure him to the house! A sense of shame and disgust came over her. She had thought her mother had been unhappy because of the differences between them; she had felt such a thrill of tenderness and remorse as she had read her note, and all the time that mother had been speculating as to how this stranger would regard her, and looking upon him as a possible means for ridding herself of an encumbrance.

Perhaps she judged her mother too harshly; but in any case the revulsion of feeling was for the time intense, and overpowered every other consideration. She felt like a trapped bird, and all the old wild rebellious thoughts surged back in a dark, continuous stream, and her brow grew dark and her eyes wrathful as the opening door revealed the figure of the new guest.

"She—make an impression—no fear of that," muttered Bessie Saxton as she watched that dark, gloomy face. "I know what Frenchmen are; they like wit, *verve*, brightness, *chic*. Upon my word I think I'll go in for him myself, as he's so rich."

She drew the lace tucker a little higher about her shapely shoulders, and fired a Parthian glance in the direction of Count Pharamond, who was standing some little distance off. Noel Hill had at once usurped Sheba, and she, nothing loth, had retreated with him to the farthest corner of the large room—effectually playing into her friend's hand, and vexing her mother excessively.

The count, apparently disregarding Miss Saxton's overtures, dropped into a seat beside his hostess.

"You will pardon me, madame," he said, "if I express my admiration for everything Australian, as displayed in your charming *ménage*; most of all, for your exquisite young daughter. I have never seen anything like her—never."

Mrs. Levison coloured with gratified pride, under the thick coating of powder.

Did he really mean it? Was it possible that her plan was going to succeed? She glanced across at Sheba—what a fool the girl was to occupy herself with a penniless curate, when here were fortune and rank honouring her by admiration.

"You flatter her, count," she said in a fluttered voice. "She is, I suppose, different to your Parisian young ladies."

"Different!" The count raised his eyebrows. "Ah! that it was possible to express *how* different. Those divine features, that exquisite mouth, that serene, unconscious grace—*Ciel!* and what a sensation she would make in a Parisian *salon*. Might one be pardoned for asking who is the gentleman by her side who seemed so friendly, if one might say as much without offence?"

"Oh," said Mrs. Levison, "that is only her old teacher—tutor, I may say. He has known her since she was a child."

"A clergyman?" the count insinuated gravely.

"Yes, a clergyman," assented Mrs. Levison, gratified, if anything, that the count should seem a little uneasy. In the early stages of a love affair, jealousy is a great help, in the latter as great a hindrance.

"Then," the count resumed, "might he consider he had madame's gracious permission to call and still further pursue the too charming acquaintance of herself, and of her lovely daughter?"

Mrs. Levison's reply can be easily guessed. Having received it, Pharamond took himself off to Bessie Saxton's side, and rendered audacious by her ready encouragement, which she flattered herself was so *chic*, whispered flatteries, compliments and insinuations that brought the blood to her cheek, and for which her father would have kicked him out of the house had he heard them, or understood the veiled significance of French phrases.

Mrs. Levison laid her head on her pillow that night with a sigh of content and relief. Providence had indeed been kind to her. Her scheme seemed almost ridiculously easy of fulfilment. Oh! what a triumph to marry Sheba to such a husband, and what an inexplicable, heavenly relief to think of her *as* married!

(To be continued.)

LIFE IN A CONVICT COLONY THIRTY-FIVE YEARS AGO.

By LIEUT.-GENERAL HENRY WRAY, R.E., C.M.G.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA was first settled in 1829, but it made such small progress that in 1849 the colonists applied to the Home Government to send out selected male convicts to start a convict establishment; their objects being, first, to get the benefit of the expenditure, which must inevitably be considerable; second, to obtain a supply of cheap labour for their farms. It suited the Colonial Office to comply with this request, and in 1850, Captain Henderson (now Sir Edmund, K.C.B.) took out the first batch of convicts. He had on his staff five corporals of the Royal Sappers and Miners, who proved themselves useful, and in consequence he applied for an officer of the Royal Engineers and twenty-five more non-commissioned officers and men. Sir John Burgoyne, at that time head of the corps, thought the opportunity a favourable one for clearing the ranks of married soldiers, and a company, in all a hundred strong, was made up, of whom seventy-five were married, the idea being that after they had done the work required of them they would settle on free grants of land. I was offered, as a lieutenant, the command of this company and jumped at the offer, for it was thought that industrial exhibitions were going to do away with war, and the work to be done was out of the ordinary course. The other officers of the company were Second Lieutenant Du Cane (now Sir Edmund, K.C.B.) and Second Lieutenant Crossman (now Sir William, K.C.M.G.).

I often smile at the row the doctors would make, if the accommodation provided and the arrangements made for the sixty-five men, fifty-five women and seventy-nine children, on board the old ship "Anna Robertson," which went to the bottom off the Cape on her way home, were offered now-a-days for troops. The people were packed close; the water, all in casks, was taken in alongside in the Thames opposite St. Katherine's Docks, and the sweetness of the tinned *bowilli* issued every second day was frequently not above suspicion. But although we touched nowhere, and were nearly a hundred days out of sight of land, we had no sickness except whooping-cough, and the only deaths were those of two young children, the births on board having been ten.

Before we left England the men were told, quite truly, that meat in the colony cost twopence a pound, bread rather less than in England, and that wild ducks and kangaroo could be had for

the trouble of shooting them ; but the first thing they learnt, when the ship came to an anchor in Gage's roads and was put in quarantine for the whooping-cough, was that gold had been discovered in Victoria, that every one who had anything to sell had sent it off to Melbourne ; that every one who could had gone off too ; that meat was a shilling and twopence a pound, and bread sixpence, butter, milk and most other things being hardly obtainable at any price. The wild duck and kangaroo part of the expectations was correct enough, only they were a little difficult to get near, and it was easier and much more certain to pay a black fellow to shoot them.

The men thought they had been deceived, and some of them were in a desperate state, but they soon calmed down when I took two of the oldest soldiers into the cuddy and convinced them that nothing could possibly have been known of the gold discoveries when we left England, and on my telling them that they might be quite sure Captain Henderson would do what was necessary to enable them to live till prices went down. And a very fortunate thing for us all this difficulty turned out to be, for the men on disembarkation were set to work at their trades on a scale of prices which enabled them to earn on the average three shillings a day working pay, instead of one shilling—at that time the highest rate of pay for soldiers employed on day work. This scale of payment continued long after the prices of the necessaries of life had fallen, not to the figures anticipated, but far lower than in England, with the result that when I left the company early in 1858, I handed over to my successor about seventy men, all married, about a hundred and fifty children and between six hundred and seven hundred pounds in the regimental savings bank. The officers in the colony also benefited, for, on account of the high prices, an allowance was made to them which was not withdrawn for a good many years.

With the exception of an outbreak of typhoid fever immediately after disembarkation, entirely due, as we learnt afterwards, to the wells and the cesspits having been sunk close together in a sandy soil, there was never any serious sickness in the company ; and I can safely say that, notwithstanding the great heat in summer, I have never been in any climate equal all round to that of Western Australia. Six years after I left Australia, I spent a year on service in Japan, the climate of which is splendid, but I never experienced there the feeling, common enough in Australia, that mere existence was a pleasure. There were days when one got on one's horse for a solitary ride of thirty miles or more, when one felt inclined to shout for joy, and not at all bored by the prospect of such a ride all alone.

Captain Henderson had lost no time in starting the convict system, and, long before the company arrived in December, 1851, had converted a number of wool sheds at Fremantle into a tem-

porary prison, where the convicts (or prisoners, for we were never so rude as to speak of them as convicts) lived in association. The warders were chiefly soldier-pensioners who had come out as guards on board the convict ships; the pensioners not employed as warders being enrolled for duty as a military guard, forming with the sappers the garrison of Fremantle. The sappers did not usually take garrison guards, their labour being too valuable in a place where mechanics earned from eight to twelve shillings a day, but they did this duty during the annual training of the pensioners, and turned out in case of an actual or threatened disturbance among the convicts, which, however, occurred only three times during my six years' stay in the colony.

The position of the sappers as mechanics was very difficult, for having convicts as their labourers, it was their interest to get as much work out of them as they could; and the consequence, not an unnatural one, was that the prison authorities always suspected them of giving the convicts tobacco, food and liquor. This led to much friction between the governor of the prison and myself; for although I was a magistrate I was bound to protect my men; and this friction was increased by his asking that the sappers should be ordered to give him the military salute, which I entirely objected to and which they would not give of their own accord. But it was a source of constant trouble, and on one occasion led to a corporal being committed for trial for stealing government property, and on another to a sapper being fined for giving a convict drink. The grand jury ignored the bill against the corporal, but the sapper had to pay his fine. Considering the temptation and the opportunities, I always thought my men got through very creditably with only one conviction.

Nearly the whole of the sappers came home a few years afterwards, the work for which they were sent out having been completed. It would not have paid them to settle in the colony. Their chance, if, as originally intended, they became settlers, lay in their working at their trades, filling up their unemployed time by cultivating their allotments; but this chance was cut from under them by the training as mechanics, in the shops and on the works, of a large number of convicts. These men, when they went on ticket-of-leave, were almost always free from any incumbrances, could move from place to place as work turned up, and were numerous enough to do all the work the settlers required. I do not know whether the pensioner settlers did better after I left the colony than they did before, but at that time their success as settlers was certainly not such as to induce the sappers to follow their example.

The convict system was what was then spoken of as the "Moral Force System," which had been first introduced by Captain Maconochie at Norfolk Island, and carried on in Ireland and in England by Sir Walter Crofton and Sir Joshua Jebb. It was

admirably adapted to give a man who had got into trouble through some strong temptation, a chance of a new start in life and of becoming a good citizen. I cannot say that I ever knew of a single case of reformation beyond this, and a number of instances came within my knowledge of men, who had behaved, whilst under control, as reformed men would be expected to behave, coming back to the prison from ticket-of-leave for having again yielded to temptation, frequently, or I may say generally, of precisely the same kind as that which led to their original offence. I was also quite convinced that many men came out of prison far worse men than they were when they went in, and it is difficult to see how any other result could have been expected, in view of the fact that the convicts lived in association for months or even years, and were sure to brag to each other about their former lives. A ticket-of-leave man, who lived with me as a servant for upwards of five years, whom I came to trust thoroughly and who showed himself completely worthy of that trust, told my wife that, during the time he was in prison, he learnt all the tricks of the trades of his comrades. This association was unavoidable, until the new prison which ultimately provided for five hundred men in separate cells was ready for occupation, when the evil was reduced to some extent, but even then the association in the working parties continued.

The system may be shortly described. The convicts were in three classes—"Prisoners," "Ticket-of-leave" men and "Conditional Pardon" men, besides which there was the "Re-convicted Gang," some of whom were in chains. The "Prisoners" were in the prison at Fremantle; the "Ticket-of-leave" men were spread about the colony, which was divided into ticket-of-leave districts, each with a resident magistrate; the "Conditional Pardon" men were absolutely free, except that they could not return home before the expiration of their original sentence.

A "prisoner" could shorten his period of imprisonment by good conduct, and when discharged to ticket-of-leave, he received some of the money which had been credited to him during his stay in prison, the amount so credited being dependent upon his conduct, as evidenced by the number of "marks" recorded against his name; he could go to any district he chose, either to an employer or to set up for himself, the only restrictions placed upon him being that he must not leave his district without a pass from the resident magistrate, or from his employer if he had one; that he must be at home every night at ten o'clock; that he must not possess firearms; that he must give an account at any time of the way in which he earned his living; that he must report himself personally to the police of his district twice a year, and that he must pay a small sum annually to cover the expense of his passage to the colony. If a ticket-of-leave man wished to go to any particular district in order to look for employment, he could be

transferred to the depôt of that district, where he was employed, at road making as a rule, and paid; he was free to spend his money as he liked, the only restriction upon him, after work, being that he must be in the depôt at eight o'clock, and that he must accept any employment which gave him twelve pounds a year with rations and lodging, being liable to be sent back to prison if he refused.

After a period of about half of his original sentence, a well-conducted ticket-of-leave man received a conditional pardon, the conditions being as already stated.

A ticket-of-leave man sent back for misconduct was sentenced for a fixed time, after which he again received a ticket-of-leave, if he earned it. The local sentence was in addition to his original one, and one-fourth of it, which could never exceed nine months, was passed in solitary confinement.

The inequality of sentences for apparently similar offences, which is so frequently commented upon in England, occurred in Western Australia, and I am afraid that it always will occur. More than twenty years ago I tried a scale of punishments with soldiers, and very soon found it to be impossible, consistently with considering each man's temperament and the possibility that a light punishment or none at all might keep him out of trouble in future, to award punishment by a scale.

The criminal law of a convict colony is necessarily more severe than that of other places, and in Western Australia "attempt to murder" and "rape" were punishable and actually punished by death. This law applied to the whole population, not to the convicts only. My recollection is that not more than eight persons were hanged for murder or attempt to murder during my stay in the colony and only one was hanged for rape.

The magistrates had the power of sentencing a ticket-of-leave man to three years' imprisonment, but they had no power to flog, corporal punishment being confined to prisoners in Fremantle prison, its infliction being ordered by the visiting magistrate of the prison, and the number of lashes limited to one hundred.

As a matter of course, alterations in the system had to be made, but they were wonderfully few, and with one exception of small importance. The exception was a great change made in the ticket-of-leave part of the system. It was very soon found that 1s. 1½d. a day with rations, lodging, easy work—for it is not possible to get convicts as a body to do even a moderately good day's work—and freedom after work till eight o'clock, offered too great inducements to many of the ticket-of-leave men to shirk going into private service, and the daily pay was reduced, first to 9½d., then to 7½d. and finally to 5½d. Even with this payment, out of which the passage money contribution was stopped, many of them preferred remaining in the depôts, and as the settlers seldom complained of refusals to take service with them, the ticket-of-leave

men remained in considerable numbers. When Captain Henderson was going on leave to England early in 1856, the governor of the colony, Captain Kennedy (afterwards Sir Arthur, G.C.M.G., C.B.), appointed me Acting Comptroller of Convicts, and Captain Henderson advised me to do away with payment to men in the depôts, to feed, clothe them in some sort of uniform and keep them in the depôts when not at work. Accordingly I issued a notice that this change would take place in two months, and the ticket-of-leave men finding that life in the depôts would not be so pleasant as it had been, went into private service in shoals. The result was to relieve the government of the cost of (I write from memory) some 250 men out of 350, those remaining being generally useless for any work at all, and not only to effect an economy of from £5,000 to £7,000 a year, but to put the settlers throughout the colony in a better position with regard to their ticket-of-leave servants. As a consequence of this measure, the passage money payment was done away with. It had always in my view been an indefensible and irritating tax, very difficult to collect, and as a rule, collected only from the better disposed men. Any ticket-of-leave man could leave the depôt at once, if he got employment, or showed that he could earn an honest living. The change was effected without trouble of any kind, and the new system worked perfectly during the rest of the time I was driving the convict coach, about eighteen months, when Captain Henderson returned from leave.

I may here say that the ticket-of-leave men were generally very well behaved, and that at no time was it necessary to carry arms, when on the road or indeed anywhere. On one occasion, when I had put my "Colt" in my wallet, hoping to get a shot at some turkey bustards which, I was told, had been seen several times close to the road I was going to travel, the stableman at the place I put up at expressed his surprise and asked if it had become necessary to carry arms.

In my opinion it was a great misfortune both for the mother country and for the colony that the other Australian colonies insisted upon transportation to Western Australia being put a stop to. I have no doubt that they were quite right, for at least nine-tenths of the conditional pardon men and ex-pirees would have found their way there, and they would eventually have had a large ex-criminal population. I believe that the ticket-of-leave system in England works as well as it can be expected to work, but it cannot possibly afford that opportunity to criminals to begin life afresh, which the circumstances of Western Australia afforded, or which any newly settled country would afford.

I will now relate some personal experiences which may illustrate the peculiarities of life in a convict colony more than thirty years ago. Of necessity they are egotistical.

About May, 1852, a large ship, the "Eglinton," loaded with

Government stores, and having on board £15,000 in specie, ran on a reef some thirty miles north of Fremantle and became a total wreck. Captain Henderson received the first news of the wreck from his brother, afterwards Bursar of Magdalen, who was killed in 1882 in rescuing a woman from a carriage, the horses of which had run away. He had started from the wreck on the previous day with some other passengers. Captain Henderson's butler, a ticket-of-leave man, at first refused to let him in, a walk of thirty miles, with a night in the bush after a wreck, having somewhat spoiled his natural neatness. His companions had knocked up, and were somewhere between the wreck and Fremantle. Captain Henderson at once chartered a small schooner, put on board a diving apparatus, found a convict to act as diver with a ticket-of-leave man to help him, while I found a sapper, who could dive if necessary and acted in a way as a guard, and sent her up the coast. The sergeant of police at Fremantle and I then went to look for the lost passengers, whom we found, after a long beat backwards and forwards from the coast into the bush, walking along the beach in the sea, suffering much from thirst, but all right otherwise, and we then went on to the wreck. The schooner arrived in the course of the day, as well as the water police, a small fleet of whale boats looking for salvage, a commissariat officer with a military guard to take charge of the money, and a number of people of all sorts, who came out of curiosity.

There were two reefs outside of the wreck, over which she had passed, striking more or less heavily, and there were seeming breaks in these reefs, through one of which the water police whale boat tried to pass out to the schooner, which was beating about outside. The break in the reef looked smooth enough, although there were heavy breakers on each side of it, but when we were about half-way through, a great roller came in and sent the boat up like a rearing horse, happily passing under us and breaking just astern. The sea being full of sharks on that coast, we lost no time in turning round, and getting out of the break as soon as we could, and I do not think that that boat's crew ever rowed harder than they did for the next five minutes. The schooner's people soon afterwards found an opening in the reefs further to the north, and brought the diving apparatus to the wreck in their dingy. The men who had come to look for salvage, with one or two exceptions, would not help us, and the water police crew had to look after their own boat, so that about eight of us had to do the whole of the work of trying to save the money, which was on the keel of the ship close to the stern. We had to remove a large number of powder-barrels and other things from the main deck before the diver could get at the hatchway and break it open, and when we had done that we had to work the apparatus between us. The diver's part of the work was very dangerous, as the stern of the ship had opened all down the

rudder-post, and as he was washed about by the seas rolling in through the opening, his dress might have been caught by a projecting nail or by a broken timber, and he must have been drowned. As it was, he succeeded in recovering the money. For this service he received £200 and a free pardon. I never knew what reward the ticket-of-leave man received. Eventually the Treasury granted £150 to be divided amongst those who had been instrumental in saving £15,000.

I picked up a small experience on this occasion, of which I afterwards made use as an engineer. At first all the water required by the crew and passengers, who were camped on the beach, had to be brought from the wreck, but one of the settlers showed them that by sinking a flour-barrel in the sand, a few feet from high-water mark, a fair supply of fresh water could be obtained. There is hardly any rise and fall of the sea along this coast, so that the land water is kept in by the sea, and for some distance inland stands in the wells nearly at the level of the latter. I tested this afterwards by sinking a well about fifty feet from high-water mark near Fremantle, from which the whaling ships obtained a good supply. The draft on such wells must not, however, be too quick, or the sea water will find its way in.

One evening I returned home rather late, and found a convict lunatic had taken possession of the kitchen. He had escaped from the hospital, and had nothing on but a flannel shirt. The first thing he had done when he entered the kitchen, frightening the servant girls a good deal, was to appropriate all the forks and spoons on a tray which had been got ready for my supper, and it was only on his being carried through the cottage by the warders who came to fetch him, when he dropped one of the spoons, that we discovered the theft. This man was a light-weight prize-fighter, and had been transported for some offence following a long succession of convictions for petty larceny. He was generally very quiet, not speaking for months at a time, but was extremely violent at long intervals.

When I first went to the colony there was a very clever fitter in the prison who had been transported for forging a die. He could do anything, from making a false tooth to making and using a false key. He went out on ticket-of-leave more than once, but came back again. At the time I was Acting Comptroller of Convicts, this man was working, on his own account, a steam flour-mill up the country. He applied for leave to marry, asserting that his wife was dead, and was told that if he would give me the means of making inquiries in England, he should have leave as soon as I received legal proof that his wife was no more. He could not or would not do this, and leave to marry was refused.

One day he came to me in Perth and said, "Well, sir, you won't give me leave to marry?"

I replied that I should be very glad to do so, but must first have legal proof of his wife's death.

"Well, sir," he said, "you know that any man in this colony who can drive a nail straight is a clever man, and you know I can drive a nail straight."

"Yes, I know you can."

"Then I shall 'look it."

"I would not do that if I were you, because we shall catch you, and then you will have to come back to Fremantle."

However, he persisted in threatening to "'look" it, and I had to consider how I should prevent his doing so without injuring him. I was going to Fremantle in the steamer, and when I arrived I at once sent a mounted policeman to the magistrate of his district, and requested him to take the necessary steps to prevent my friend carrying out his threat. I am sure that his rest was disturbed a good deal for some time afterwards by the police making inquiries at all hours of the night as to whether he was at home, but he did not run away in my time at any rate.

One servant I had said he had fought a duel with a policeman, which meant that he had killed a guardian of the law in some disturbance, and been convicted of manslaughter, and he told my wife that if he had been a gentleman no notice would have been taken of it. Another had killed his man in a prize fight; and another had been convicted of trying to extort money from his master. It will naturally be asked why I took such a man as the last into my service, but I made a point of not asking what a convict had been sent out for, and only ascertained afterwards, generally from the men themselves, what crime they had committed. I do not take any credit for this, because the prison authorities were rightly shy of spoiling a man's chance in life by telling his previous history. I took this man over from Captain Henderson when he went on leave, and he was a first-rate groom, but he would persist in burning one of my horses for lampers, in spite of my orders not to do it, and I discharged him in consequence. Being at that time Acting Comptroller of Convicts, I was in a position to inquire quietly what his offence was, with the result mentioned. He got his conditional pardon about a week afterwards, and went to India with a cargo of horses.

One servant I had was a silent man, who did his work well. One day he disappeared, and after waiting for twenty-four hours I went into his room, when I found on his pillow a large placard on which was hand-printed in Roman capitals about an inch long: "Let thy servant depart in peace." I let him depart, and heard afterwards he was doing well in another district. I never knew what offence he had committed.

The servant of whom I have previously spoken was a trained gardener, but could turn his hand to most things. He was, with two other exceptions, the only convict about whose guilt I had any

doubt. He had got fifteen years for arson, and my reasons for doubting his guilt were first, that the story he told my wife—he never said a word to me about it—was in itself a probable one; second, that I received a letter from the gentleman in whose service he was at the time of the trial, giving me a similar account of the circumstances. On one occasion I had been in Fremantle till midnight, and on returning home my wife told me that the dog had been barking furiously for some time. It was a moonlight night, such as is seldom seen in England, and taking the dog, I hunted the place all over. Finding nothing, I locked the dog into the kitchen and went to bed, the dog being still quite furious. I had not been in bed five minutes when I heard my servant, who had a room at the stable, calling for help, and going out as quickly as I could, found him in his shirt only, kneeling on the chest of a man who had sneaked into his room with no good object, for he bolted as soon as my servant woke up. John, as I shall call him, went for him and knocked him over in the middle of the paddock, where I found them. We secured the fellow, who was a free man, a sailor, suspected of having committed a burglary at another house. When the police came they had almost to carry him, for he pretended to have been hurt and would not walk; but directly he got outside the paddock into the road, he slipped his handcuffs and bolted into the scrub. The night was too bright for him, and he was soon caught. Next day he got three months, but there happened to be a short-handed ship in the roads, just about to sail for Ceylon, and he was allowed to ship on board of her. The colony could well afford to get rid of a rascal it was not obliged to keep.

I found that many convicts looked on their offences in a light quite different from that in which they are regarded by other people. The men who had committed what they called the gentleman's crime, forgery, looked upon themselves as superior to the ordinary convict who had been guilty of the vulgarity of theft or burglary, and it must be said for them that the "gentlemen" as a rule took some pride in their dress in the way of cleanliness and such neatness as was possible with the convict uniform, which was not, except with the re-convicted and runaway men, so horribly ugly as it is in England. One of these forgers was employed for a year or more as a clerk in my office, and he did his work so well, that when his period of imprisonment was about six months from its termination I interceded for him, and got him his ticket-of-leave before it was due. As soon as he was told of this, he came into my room in his convict dress to thank me. I asked him if he knew of any "prisoner" who could take his place, and he named another forger, a German, and after telling me what a good clerk he was, he wound up by saying, "And I can vouch for his being a most respectable man." The German proved to be a very good clerk and was very useful to me, for I took advantage of his being in

the office to rub up my knowledge of his language. My "very respectable" clerk went into business with the contractor for timber, and was drowned in crossing a flooded river some three or four years afterwards.

The same peculiar way of looking at their offences was illustrated on another occasion by a convict whom I had known some years before on the works at Gibraltar. He was a great, powerful man, of the type one frequently sees depicted in *Punch*. One day, just after a shipload of convicts had been landed and were working, as they always did after arrival, in barrow runs for a few days to enable them to stretch their limbs after long idleness on board ship, I saw my friend again. When he thought he was far enough away from the warder in charge, he dropped his barrow, and came up to me.

"You recollect me, sir?"

"Yes, I do, perfectly. Did you come here from Gibraltar?"

"No, sir; from England."

"What for?"

"Burglary, sir."

By this time the warder thought he had talked to me long enough, and ordered him to go back to his work, which he did, saying:

"And I hope you won't forget me, sir."

A ticket-of-leave man came once to ask me a favour, and began by telling me how pleased he was to see me, because my father had married him. The poor fellow's face grew very long indeed, when he found that my father had not been a parson.

I have said that outbreaks in the prison were few, and this was due to three causes. First, the system was a humane one, humanely administered; second, the governor of the prison possessed a thorough knowledge of convicts; third, the entire absence of confidence in each other amongst the convicts themselves. Any convict could see the governor any morning, subject of course to the risk of punishment if he made frivolous complaints, or had really nothing to say; and a larger or smaller number did so daily. If anything in the way of an organized resistance to discipline were contemplated, the governor always heard of it beforehand from one or more of his morning visitors, and the convicts knowing this, and being quite unable to spot the traitor, generally gave up combination as a bad job. On one occasion, when an hour had been added to their working time in the middle of the Australian summer, they determined to strike. But the governor knew all about it, and got together all his warders, out of sight, my company under arms being also close by and out of sight. In order not to attract attention, I went in plain clothes into the yard, where the convicts, some three or four hundred in number, were formed up in close column of working parties, and stood in a casual sort of way at the door of Captain Henderson's office, close

to the head of the column, Captain Henderson looking on from his office upstairs. When the chief warder gave the word to march off, not a man moved, and on his repeating the command, again not a man moved. He then went into the governor's office, who was prepared for what had happened. The governor, a small, dapper man, who always looked as if he had just come out of a band-box, waited a minute or two, and then strolled out of his office, with a memorandum in one hand and a pencil in the other, apparently adding up some figures. When he got close to the left-hand man of the front working party, a great, powerful fellow nearly six feet high, he stopped short and turning sharp to him, pointing at him with his pencil, said quite quietly:

"Do you refuse to go to work?"

"No, sir."

"Then fall in there," pointing to his own right.

The man obeyed. The governor treated the rear rank man and two or three others in the same way, and then giving the word "right face"—we used to "face" from the halt in those days—the whole column filed off to work, and the strike was over.

Very occasionally a row occurred in the prison from unforeseen causes, but these were generally of small dimensions, and dealt with by the warders, without help. There was, however, one of this kind which promised to be serious. It arose from somewhat peculiar circumstances. The Roman Catholic chaplain had on the Sunday preached a sermon to the men of his faith, who were all lodged together, in which he had said something which the governor thought injurious to discipline, and on the Monday he suspended the chaplain from duty, the consequence being that on the Tuesday morning the Roman Catholic prisoners had no prayers. They resented this, and after dinner refused to turn out for work, and threatened violence. As matters looked serious my company was sent for, and after galloping to the sapper barracks and telling the colour-sergeant to "double" down as many men as he could get together at once, without troubling himself about their being smart, I went on to the prison. When I reached the long hut, where the mutineers were, the warders had been collected in considerable force, and were just about to attack. As I had nothing at that time to do with the discipline of the convicts, I merely looked on. The mutineers, about a hundred in number, were at a disadvantage, for the hammock frames narrowed their front to about ten feet, and protected the warders on both flanks. The arrangement for the attack was that four or five warders, covered by the rest, went for one particular convict, not minding any blows they might get from the others. When they had overpowered their man they brought him out, and went back for another. When five had been brought out, the rest gave in. The five men received at once a hundred lashes each in the presence of the whole of the convicts and a guard composed of my company and

enrolled pensioners. This, with one exception about a year before, when some one threw spirits in bladders over the wall of the prison, and some convicts got drunk and became violent, was the only occasion on which I ever saw corporal punishment inflicted, for although it was not done away with for many years after I joined the army in 1843 I never saw a soldier flogged, nor was I ever a member of a court martial which sentenced a soldier to be flogged; and although I sailed a good deal in Her Majesty's ships afterwards, no sailor was flogged on board any one of them.

I was never an advocate for flogging except for violence, and when I took over the duty of Acting Comptroller of Convicts one of the first things I did was to ask the visiting magistrate to confine flogging to acts of violence and to persistent idleness. I do not think that during the two years I was in office half-a-dozen convicts were flogged for violence; but one man, who never could be made to work by other punishments, received at my suggestion twenty-five lashes, my idea being that he was a cur, and that he would work rather than be flogged again—and he did.

I also asked the visiting magistrate to stop the flogging of convicts for running away, because first, I said that if I were a convict I should run away if I could, and second, because the men ran away in ignorance of the great difficulty of escaping from the colony, and, unless they were caught immediately afterwards, always suffered severe hardships, and underwent physical suffering enough.

No "prisoner" ever got away from the colony during the six years I was there, ticket-of-leave men doing so only very occasionally. In the summer time, when there was no rain for months, the police simply put a native policeman on the track of the runaway, and he would run him down generally in twenty-four hours. In winter, when rain fell very heavily, the tracks were soon washed out. The colony being long and narrow, with a good many rivers running down from the higher land to the coast, the police had only to watch the river crossings, and never failed to catch the men they were after in a week or so.

Bushranging, as practised in the other colonies, did not exist, for there were comparatively few farms to rob, there was no extent of country for a bushranger to hide in, and there was, and is still, no land communication with the eastern colonies.

My wife and I had three experiences of runaway convicts, one of which might have had serious consequences. I was away from home one night on some duty, and my wife was left, as she often was, in the cottage with two women servants, whom that evening she had allowed to go out. While they were away, she heard some one come in at the front gate, and, thinking it was my colour-sergeant, took no notice. Later on she heard some one at the back, but, not being a nervous woman, again took no notice. The next morning the police tracked two

re-convicted men, who had escaped from the prison, up to the cottage, which was on the border of the town, and some two hundred yards distant from the nearest house. These men told the doctor, who examined them medically before they were flogged, that they could not make out whether I was at home or not. Fortunately they came to the conclusion that I was, and went away, hiding themselves in a stack of straw close by, where the police found them.

Nearly the same thing occurred again afterwards, when I was at home; but we only knew of the visit the next morning, when the police tracked the runaways up to the window of the room where we were at breakfast.

The third experience was that of a young convict, who was supposed not to be "all there," escaping from his working party in broad daylight. He was going to pass about a hundred yards in front of my cottage, when I saw him and intercepted him, speaking to him by name. I said, "Don't you think you had better go back; you will only get yourself into trouble."

He replied, "I'd as lief knock your head off as look at you;" but he went back, and I have no doubt that I saved him a flogging.

The native police were kept solely for the purpose of tracking, which, like all the natives, they did in a marvellous way. I have seen a native track a kangaroo across dry rocky ground, where I could not see a mark at all, going at a gentle run all the time; and when I was in Ireland, in 1879-82, I suggested to one of the staff at the Castle that it would be worth while to try trackers on moonlighters. I still think that their employment, not necessarily Australians, who by this time are difficult to get, would be a good move.

The natives were generally harmless and good-natured, but my experience was that they could not be permanently civilized. When the Roman Catholic bishop returned from Europe, about 1856, he brought back a native servant, who had been with him for some two years or more. I saw this man when he landed, and was greatly struck by his appearance and manners, yet when he fell ill, shortly afterwards, he deserted the Catholic mission, and went back to his tribe to die in a native hut, with a kangaroo skin to cover him.

The natives would come into the town to earn money for tobacco by splitting firewood, or working in the stores; but they would seldom work longer than was necessary to get money for their immediate wants, and then they would loaf about, or go back into the bush again. They were, however, very obedient to the law, except when some one gave them liquor, which was forbidden, and then they took to brandishing their spears and throwing their kyries in a dangerous manner. One afternoon I was looking out of my cottage window, when I saw a drunken native

spear at one of his wives. A lot of them had come down to the coast for a gorge of whale's flesh, the bay whalers having killed and cut in a whale a day or two before. I thought it right to interfere, and walked slowly down to the man, taking with me a couple of stirrup leathers, as I could not at the moment find a piece of rope to tie him with. I found that I knew him, and speaking to him by name, ordered him to put down his spear, which he did. I then told him to hold out his hands, which he also did, and securing them in a very rough way with the stirrup leathers, I led him off towards the town. In a short time I met the police, who had got wind of the danger, and were coming to fetch him.

I once showed a native who was sitting at my back door on a hot day in summer, and whose presence was, to say the least of it, disagreeable, a bit of soap, a rag, and two sixpences, and pointing to the pump, told him I would give him the "white money" if he would use the rag and the soap. The black fellow grinned and went through the motions of using them, while I looked on, but although there was an improvement, it was only sufficient to warrant my giving him one sixpence, with the promise that he should have the other on his completing our bargain, which he never did.

Many of the horses bucked badly, and the conclusion I came to was that buckjumping was almost, if not quite, due to bad breaking. I had often heard that some stock were more likely than others to turn out buckjumpers, and with the light since thrown upon "heredity," I have no doubt this was true, but as no more trouble was taken to break this stock than was taken with other horses I did not believe it at the time. "Breaking," which might more correctly have been called "spoiling," consisted of driving a horse into a narrow stall in the corner of the stock-yard, putting a bit in his mouth, a surcingle round his body, fastening the reins to the surcingle, and turning him loose in the stock-yard, which was covered with at least a foot of straw. The first effort of the horse was to break the surcingle by blowing himself out, and the next to get rid of it by bucking. I never saw a horse succeed in doing either. Having had experience of two bad buckjumping falls, fortunately in soft places, I decided to buy unbroken horses from the herd. In all, I bought and broke three, and none of these buckjumped, though one of them was bad-tempered and had a trick of kicking high when going fast.

Many people, especially if not long from England, thought little of buckjumping, and I had an amusing experience of this. When I got my second fall from the same horse I determined to get rid of him, and tendered him to the Government for the police, of course saying why I did so. It happened that three or four days afterwards some convicts escaped, and the sergeant of police, who had been a horse artilleryman, and had only lately arrived from

England, came to my cottage with a private of police, one horse, and two saddles, &c., asking me to let him have the horse to go after the runaways. I consented, but advised him to give my horse a good burst down the sandy road with the other horse before mounting him or he would probably get a fall, which advice he was too proud to take. He mounted, never got his right stirrup, and after five or six jumps came off with a thud. The scrub was very wet, so I did not at first go to see if he was hurt, but he lay there so long that at last I went and found him just recovering his wind. He called the horse an "ungainly" brute, but mounted him again and got away all right the second time. The delight of the private at his sergeant's fall was a sight to see, for he had been anxious to try the new mount himself, and the sergeant had told him to hold his tongue. When the horse began to buck he shouted at the top of his voice, "You'll be off," and when the sergeant fell he yelled as loudly as his laughter would let him, "There; I knew you'd be off."

I never saw a Western Australian horse buck like those ridden by the cowboys at Buffalo Bill's.

The horses were wonderful stayers, and, not being coddled as horses are in England, were free from the diseases produced by hot, ill-ventilated, and badly-drained stables. A man, riding with his valise fifteen or sixteen stone, would think nothing of riding a hundred miles in two days on the same horse, resting one day, and riding back in two more.

They had a wonderful power, if they got loose, of finding their way back to the runs on which they were bred, and this gave horse owners a great chance of recovering lost horses. On two occasions horses of my own got away in the bush, and knowing where they had been bred, I recovered them without difficulty. The custom was to put a notice in the papers describing the animal, stating where he was bred, and offering the usual fee, two guineas, for his return.

My experience also led me to think that horses can find their way when it is so dark that their riders cannot see where they are going. One winter's afternoon I started rather late for a ride of over forty miles through the gum forest, on the ironstone ranges, riding a borrowed white horse and leading my own, which had got a sore back on the first part of the journey. About an hour after sunset it became so dark that I could only see that I was on a white horse. Suddenly, I was nearly pulled out of the saddle by the led horse, and on dismounting found him amongst the branches of a fallen tree. I had got off the track, and after freeing him with much trouble, mounted again, this time letting the white horse take his own line. After one or two stoppages, caused by the led horse getting into difficulties, the white horse took me back to the track and to the bush inn I was bound for.

Early in the year 1857, the Home Government presented the

colony with two lighthouses, one of which was to be erected on Breaksea Island, about seven miles E.S.E. of Prince of Wales' harbour, King George's sound, the other at the mouth of that harbour. The governor of the colony asked me, both of my subalterns having gone home the previous year, to go to Albany to arrange for their erection. This involved a journey of two hundred and fifty miles each way through the bush. I travelled in a spring cart, with a sergeant of sappers, who was to take charge of the work, and a driver, a free man. We had three horses, but one of them broke his tether rope when we were about seventy miles on our journey, and went back to the run where he was bred. It was the end of the dry season, the ground was like a stone, and having no natives with us we lost him for the time, and had to the remaining hundred and eighty miles with the two other horses. Had the carter known, as he ought to have known, where the horse had been bred, we should have got him at once, for his run was within twenty-five miles of where he broke loose, and he went straight home.

The lighthouse on Breaksea was erected by a party of forty convicts, who had been working on the Perth-Albany road. They were looked after by one warder and the sergeant of sappers. The lighthouse at the mouth of the harbour was erected by contract. Both were lighted on the 1st January, 1858.

The island was hardly approachable; there was always a swell on, no harbour of any sort, and landing had at first to be effected by jumping from the stern of a whale-boat backed close in to the smooth water-worn rocks, with the possibility of missing one's jump and tumbling into deep water, and with the further possibility of being detained on the island if the wind got up quickly. A projecting timber landing-stage, erected by a wandering American, who had been putting up timber bridges for the Government, got rid of these difficulties, and enabled the Commissariat at Albany to feed the party on the island, and also made it possible, with a derrick, to land the heavy cast-iron plates, of which the tower of the lighthouse was to be constructed. The only inhabitants were sea-birds, which bred there in great numbers, and small marsupial rats—these last, judging by the difficulty of protecting the stores of food and by the number the men killed, being in millions. I fancy they lived on the roots of the rushes with which the island was almost everywhere covered. There was some water on the island, and the sea round it was full of snapper and other fish.

After staying at Albany three weeks and completing all the arrangements for the work, the carter and I returned. In the interval the rainy season had begun, and parts of the road, *i.e.*, a track merely cleared, bridged and made passable in the softest places, were so heavy that towards the end of the journey the horses were pretty well played out. When we reached a roadside

public about fifteen miles from Perth, I started to walk to that place, but changed my mind and turned off to Fremantle. On arriving at the bridge over the Canning River, I found it had been burnt down, and as I did not care to turn back I walked along the river, which, in this neighbourhood at this time, was a deep, quick-running ditch, too wide to jump, looking for some way of getting across, and soon found a gum sapling which had fallen across the stream. It was very thin at the other end, but going at it quickly I nearly reached the other bank before it broke, and I got wet only up to the waist. After I had walked some miles, I remembered that I should have to pass through a camp of ticket-of-leave men, who were making their living by splitting shingles and sawing timber. I did not like it, as I had no arms and about forty sovereigns in my pocket. I thought of burying them with my watch and coming back for them next day, but any strolling native would certainly have found them, so finally I cut a big stick and walked on. Very soon after dark I came to the camp, and seeing no one moving about the fires, which were some fifty yards on each side of the track, I decided to go on, and passed without being heard. Of course, the only danger from these men lay in the temptation to rob, as they could hardly have failed to guess that I had money about me.

Reaching my cottage—at this time I was alone—without warning, I found my servant, who had received his conditional pardon before I left for Albany, and might, if he had chosen, have gone off with all my portable property, waiting for me. He immediately asked me if I had been paid for a horse I had sold just before starting for Albany, the purchaser having gone bankrupt while I was away. I had been paid. When I was leaving the colony I sent this man to the Cape, and in addition to an ordinary character, gave him a full statement of what I knew of his history. I did this because I thought he might be recognized as, or suspected of having been a convict, and I told him in this case to show the statement to his employer if he thought he could trust him. I heard from him for two years afterwards, and he was then in the service of the commanding Royal Engineer at the Cape, and doing well. Then his letters ceased and I never heard of him again.

Whether he was guilty of arson under a strong sense of injury or not, he was a faithful servant to me.

I left the colony early in 1858 in an empty convict ship, and in due course arrived, *viâ* Ceylon and the Red Sea, in London. On reporting myself to Colonel (afterwards Sir J. W.) Gordon, of Crimean celebrity, he took an old atlas off one of his shelves, and opening it at the map of Australia, said, "Show me where you have come from."

A HAVEN OF GOLD.

By FRANCES SELOUS.

LADY CHARLOTTE CRADDOCK presents her compliments to Messrs. Crump and Crushit.

"Her ladyship encloses her photograph, as she is desirous of pointing out to Messrs. Crump and Crushit the fact that she possesses a remarkably fine figure and elegant appearance, being in fact known as a 'fashionable beauty,' and would therefore at any time be a very good advertisement for any really stylish milliner or tailor. Owing to the extreme depression in the value of land which has naturally resulted in the diminution of the incomes of the nobility and aristocracy, Lady Charlotte Craddock proposes that Messrs. Crump and Crushit should make an arrangement to provide her ladyship with costumes for the rest of the season, her ladyship's recommendations in the very *best* society to be considered in lieu of other or pecuniary remuneration. Lady Charlotte Craddock incloses half-a-dozen cards of invitation for one week, that Messrs. Crump and Crushit may feel assured that all recommendations will be in the very best quarters. Perhaps Messrs. Crump and Crushit will be interested in knowing that Madame Sidonie supplied her ladyship, on the same conditions, with a court dress for the first Drawing-room this season, and that the dress was described in *Fiction*, *The Spheres*, and in fact in all the smartest journals, and that Sidonie received nearly a dozen orders for the next Drawing-room in consequence of the descriptions already mentioned of Lady Charlotte's appearance."

Mr. Crump—short, puffy and very glossy with pomade and finest broadcloth, and resplendent with beaming face, patent leather boots, diamond rings and ruby and diamond scarf-pin—touched an electric bell which summoned a clerk into his august presence.

"Send me the shorthand clerk," he said.

There was a knock at the door, and the shorthand writer entered.

"Sit down, Brown, and write as I dictate," said Crump, of Crump and Crushit, ladies' tailors and outfitters to H.R.H. the Princess of Wales, &c., &c., New Bond Street, W.

"MADAM,

"Mr. Crump begs me respectfully to inform you that, as he has upon his books many very pretty and solvent ladies

moving in the best society, who patronize his art and pay their bills, he can enter into no engagement to provide your ladyship with costumes for the season. Nevertheless, if your ladyship would like to call upon Mr. Crump at 11 a.m. on Monday next, which hour will be convenient to him, he will see if he thinks it would be of any service to the firm to come to any arrangement with your ladyship.

“I remain, Madam,

“Yours respectfully,

“*pro* CRUMP AND CRUSHIT.”

Lady Charlotte Craddock was only twenty-six years of age, and had enjoyed the reputation of being a fashionable beauty for seven years. The fourth of Lord Eglinton's seven unmarried daughters, seeing no chance of ever tasting the joys of a season in town while her three elder sisters remained still unmarried, and feeling that as her years already numbered eighteen she would be *passée* and “quite too frightfully elderly” before it could possibly be her turn to be presented, she made the most of her opportunities at afternoon tea during the autumn, so that before the end of the shooting season, Colonel Sir Algernon Craddock had formally asked for her hand and had been accepted as son-in-law by Lord and Lady Eglinton, who congratulated themselves upon having been able to establish a daughter so well without any of the expenses of presentation or season in London.

Lady Charlotte Craddock was presented upon her marriage, and immediately took a foremost place among that season's belles.

In the autumn, her husband's regiment was ordered to Fizabad, an Indian station in the province of Oude. As a dutiful wife, Lady Charlotte accompanied her husband to India; but as she found life unendurable in the station, she soon formed the opinion that the heat was injurious to her health, and discovered that her constitution had already suffered severely from the trying effects of the climate and that it was absolutely necessary for her to fly to the hills for the benefit of her health. There the purer air, heavily charged with the flirtation which ever flourishes in Indian hill stations, apparently had a very beneficial, though not lasting, effect upon her health; for it seemed to be necessary that Lady Charlotte Craddock should spend the greater portion of the year at Tucoori, or the Happy Vale, where her solitude was relieved by the society and attentions of Mr. Loftus Brackenbury, a young cavalry officer, who was able to enjoy invalid leave with sufficient health and spirits to inaugurate a flirtation with the belle of the station, and to waltz at every informal dance, of which there are always many in hill stations, hastily arranged with a view to beguiling the weariness of lone married women whose husbands are away in the plains. At these

little dances it soon became a matter of course for Mr. Brackenbury and Lady Charlotte to waltz together through a very large percentage of the programme; and if during her stay in India, love-letters and keepsakes crept mysteriously into Lady Charlotte's dressing-case, her elderly husband was so unobservant and seemed to care so little, that it really served him right. So said Lady Charlotte in answer to the time and novel-honoured still, small voice, &c.

Sir Algernon Craddock had but two years more to serve in India, and at the expiration of that period he and Lady Charlotte left the station in which his wife had spent so many dreary days, and in whose adjacent station had occurred the one small shred of romance that could be said to have entered into her life. When she left India, Lady Charlotte bewailed her separation from the one man she had ever loved. It had been delightful to her to arrange stolen interviews and preconcerted meetings that should appear unexpected; and the excitement consequent on the acting necessitated by such enterprises gave to the attainment of her end a zest and an intoxication which she enjoyed to the uttermost.

Lady Charlotte Craddock tried to lessen the hardship of separation by correspondence. A bomb launched by a discharged maid in the shape of an anonymous letter inclosing a few specimens of this correspondence informed Sir Algernon that his beautiful wife had deceived him. He promptly altered his will and instituted proceedings for divorce; but he met his death in the hunting field before Sir James Hannen could hear the case that might have furnished the papers with so many sensational paragraphs and so much matter for witty comment; and might have afforded the middle and lower middle classes, through the medium of those papers, a short insight into the ways and manners of the upper classes, and regaled their curiosity with the refined and elegant phraseology and the purity of diction which from time to time delight the curious commonalty who read the reports of divorces in high life.

Before she was twenty-five, Lady Charlotte Craddock, in a tulle head-dress which set the fashion in widows' caps for some years, bewailed the loss of her husband and the property which he had left, with the exception of her very modest settlement, to the distant cousin who succeeded to his baronetcy.

Unwilling to return to her father's house and play second fiddle to her unmarried sisters, Lady Charlotte resolved to content herself with a very small establishment in Mayfair. A tiny house squeezed into a corner near the Park and elbowing a mews, swallowed up over £200 a year, leaving a balance of £400, and credit, with which to maintain the small establishment, half brougham-victoria, wondrous dresses and bonnets, &c., &c. Of course, this style of living must lead to debt and difficulty; but Lady

Charlotte, whose portrait had been three times in the Grosvenor, and whose appearance was continually being commented upon in society papers and fashion magazines, relied upon making a good second match before she should have plunged very deeply into debt.

But Fortune had not lately favoured Lady Charlotte, insomuch as she had been a widow two years and no eligible match had offered, and she had found it hard to live in accordance with what she considered the necessities of her rank and position and keep her head above the growing current of debt. It was after contemplating many expediciencies that she addressed her somewhat startling proposal to Messrs. Crump and Crushit.

"Insolent wretch! I wish that I could afford to order a dress and pay for it, that I might let the creature know his proper place, and not allow him to make an appointment to suit his own odious convenience." So thought Lady Charlotte, but, nevertheless, she wrote a dainty little note to express herself willing to grant Mr. Crump an interview at the hour he mentioned.

Before seeing Lady Charlotte Craddock, Mr. Crump had been careful to obtain ample *renseignements* upon the subject of her social position and reputation. His head buyer, as a man much about town and likely to hear all the *on dits* in high life, had been instructed to find out what he could about her. His inquiries resulted in the unanimous verdict "that there was no doubt about it, she was A 1; had been on the Prince's drag at Sandown last autumn; had worn a thirty-five guinea dress from Redfern's for the occasion; hadn't paid for it; didn't mean to. Didn't seem to pay for anything, and yet seemed to live pretty comfortable—French cook, &c. Was supposed to have gone the pace in India, so was cut off with a shilling by her husband, who had been dead two years."

Armed with these facts, Mr. Crump was able to receive Lady Charlotte with an easy affability and cool familiarity with her circumstances that made her writhe, although ladies of her class who talk of "being in blue funks," and "cheeking servant maids" cannot be supposed to possess a very great amount of sensibility or delicacy of feeling.

Mr. Crump offered his lovely guest an easy chair, and sat down in another himself with the air of being quite ready for a chat with an old and valued friend. In one hand he held a popular social journal; in the other he held the packet of invitation cards which Lady Charlotte had sent him.

"Well, now, with regard to making you an occasional dress or so, let us just see how we stand. You are certainly a very good figure; everybody knows that. I should make your waist three-quarters of an inch smaller; your shoulders require it. No doubt you would allow that. Now here is a card from Lady Dorkess. Certainly she's quite the thing, but your visiting her wouldn't

help our firm. I don't suppose she ever wore a dress that wouldn't be a disgrace to a West End tradesman. Lady — and Hon. Mrs. — h'm, h'm." Mr. Crump threw down the cards one after the other. "All these are well enough in their way, but they wouldn't help us. One of my men tells me that you were on the Prince's drag at Sandown. Now *that's* what I call good business. Everybody looks at you. 'That's a neat figure, and what a fit! Who makes her dresses?' &c.; and then Mrs. Brown, of Clapham, and Mrs. Robinson, of Brixton, cut off the nursery rice puddings for a few months, and put their husbands on short commons and come and order dresses that never look their worth on 'em, and flatter themselves that they look exactly like Lady Charlotte Craddock. Have you read this paragraph?"

Lady Charlotte took the paper that Mr. Crump held out, and she saw that there was a paragraph marked with a large cross in ink.

Lady Charlotte read: "The Prince of Wales honoured the Bataille des Fleurs with his presence. H.R.H. looked very well, and apparently enjoyed extremely good health. He paid considerable attention to Miss Dollers, the latest American beauty, who, it is rumoured, will take a place among the reigning belles in English society during the coming season. I have it on very good authority that H.R.H. threw a bunch of gardenias—said to have been grown in the Sandringham hothouses—into Miss Dollers' victoria as it passed the royal equipage."

"Do you know Miss Dollers, Lady Charlotte?"

"No, she is not in my set."

"Well then, just you look here. You get to know Miss Dollers, you bring her here and let her give me a good order, and I'll dress you for the rest of the season—that's a bargain. I'll make you a dress for Ascot or for Hurlingham, or for wherever you are likely to meet her, and then if you bring her here I'll dress you for the rest of the season. You shall be measured to-day, and directly you send me the card of invitation, or the engagement whatever it may be, the dress shall be put in hand directly. Nothing for nothing in business, you know. Now, are you agreeable to that?"

Lady Charlotte would have liked to be haughty, but her doubtful position as party to such an arrangement disarmed all haughtiness on her side, and she was fain to agree to the tailor's stipulations. Mr. Crump, of Crump and Crushit, was very pleased to pay off, in part at least, on the person of Lady Charlotte Craddock the score of all former grudges in the shape of aristocratic rudeness that he owed to her class in general.

Lady Charlotte's resources were at a very low ebb; with the exception of the rent of her house and servants' wages, she contrived to live entirely upon credit. What little ready money she possessed *en. outre* her jointure, which did not go very far in the

style of living she affected, was obtained by writing paragraphs for fashion magazines and borrowing. She felt very low-spirited as she drove away from Messrs. Crump and Crushit's, after her interview with the head of the firm. She had gained her end, but at what a price! She would have to unearth this American girl, who was probably vulgar, take her up for some little time at least, and then perhaps she would not be easy to drop. But, first of all, there might be some difficulty in the unearthing.

Lady Charlotte ordered some tea and a luncheon tray to be taken to her boudoir, a much be-wadded and be-draped stained-glass-windowed cupboard, squeezed into a corner of the staircase. Here she sat down to meditate upon her situation. The result of her meditation was that she ordered her carriage for four o'clock, and resolved to call upon a person whom she denominated "her favourite pal." As a single, motherless girl, Lady Cardington had been Lady Charlotte's bosom friend and confidante in India before she had achieved the great match which had made her a peeress.

This friend was at home, and Lady Charlotte was shown into an equally be-wadded and be-draped though much larger boudoir than the one she had just left.

After the usual feminine embraces had been exchanged, Lady Charlotte stated her case with slight modifications:—"She was very anxious to meet Miss Dollers, the new American beauty. Some one had told her that she was such a sweet creature, and Lady Charlotte felt quite drawn to her, and was determined to know her. Could Edith help her?"

"Well, my dear, I'll try. I wonder if his lordship is in London; he may know her, or some of her friends."

Lady Cardington rang the bell. "Will you inquire if his lordship dines at home to-day?"

The footman, with well-bred imperturbability, answered that "his lordship had been at Newmarket since the day before yesterday, and was not to be expected until late next day, his lordship had told Harris."

"Then you don't get on with his lordship very well, my dear, I am afraid," said Lady Charlotte, who really liked her dearest friend.

"Oh, yes, dear, I do. I always do my duty to him. I look pretty and order dinner, and he confides in his butler, and not in me, which is rather an advantage, as I am afraid I should find his confidences rather vapid, with a tendency to be decidedly more horsey than I should consider quite interesting. But now, what is to be done about this American? Do you belong to the Primrose League?"

"Oh, yes, I am a Dame, Harbinger, or a Queen's Councillor, or something or other, with a brooch."

"Very well then, Miss Dollers is sure to be one too. All Americans and parvenus who want to get into society begin with

the Primrose League. You write to her and say you want to confer with her upon the subject of election work. Find her address in the subscription lists, and write to her."

"Thanks for the hint. I'll do that. Good-bye. Thanks awfully. Are you dining alone?"

"No; Captain Vanbrugh is coming to dinner, and I am going to take him with me to Lady Dorkess. By the bye, do you know that Captain Brackenbury is on his way home?"

"No; is he?" asked Lady Charlotte, with well-feigned surprise, which might have deceived any one except a confidential female friend.

"Evidently she has *not* forgotten him," thought Lady Cardington.

Lady Charlotte had not forgotten Captain Brackenbury. She had in her possession a letter from him announcing his intention of leaving India, and giving the date on which a letter would reach him at Suez, and she had written to Suez a letter in which she told him of the joy which she would experience in seeing him again, in impassioned language of which few would have believed the fashionable beauty capable.

"I wonder if he really knows how much I care for him," she thought. "People think me shallow and only capable of a flirtation *pour passer le temps*, because I married a man twice my age for the sake of getting out of the nursery. I don't suppose they know how delightful it is to wear pinafores and have one's hair down one's back, and dine in the schoolroom long after one's fully grown up, just because one's two elder sisters 'hang on hand,' as mamma used to say. I wonder if I were to marry him, now that I am free, whether I should be happy. It would mean living at Chatham or some other horrid place, and contriving and managing; and being waited on by one's husband's orderly—a curious sort of object, neither soldier, servant, nor good red herring—and a one-horse carriage drawn by my husband's charger, when he could spare it. *Je m'en doute*. Poor Loftus! If only he were rich and could pay *all* my debts, how happy we might be together."

Lady Charlotte acted upon her friend's advice, and wrote a gracious little note to Miss Dollers, in which Lady Charlotte Craddock presented her compliments to Miss Dollers, &c., and begged that Miss Dollers would be so kind as to call upon her to discuss the election work of the habitation to which they both belonged.

Miss Letitia Dollers swallowed the bait willingly, and not unconsciously. "I guess I am going to be the boom of the season, and Lady Charlotte likes to be in the front," she thought, as she despatched a reply.

Lady Charlotte gushed very sweetly and with high-bred gentleness; Letitia Dollers gushed with Yankee *brusquerie*; and they parted friends.

When Lady Charlotte accepted her annual invitation from Lord Addlepayte to spend Ascot week at Addlepayte Villa, near Ascot Heath, she asked if she might bring her young friend Miss Dollers, a favour which was willingly granted, and Lady Charlotte was able to present herself to Mr. Crump armed with the honourable and noble lord's letter. Mr. Crump undertook to send Lady Charlotte a couple of dresses: a *chef d'œuvre* for the first and third day, and for the Cup day a conception in mushroom-colour which should make all other well-dressed women green with envy.

Letitia Dollers was sufficiently delighted at the receipt of her invitation to be very amenable to *all* Lady Charlotte's plans, and at her suggestion drove to Bond Street in her ladyship's dainty victoria, the maintenance of which was a marvel to the few who suspected the real state of her exchequer. After a long and solemn consultation with Mr. Crump, Junior, whose taste was said to be the guiding star of the firm, Miss Dollers gave an order for costumes for the Ascot week on so lavish a scale that Lady Charlotte felt quite sure of dresses on her own account for the rest of the season.

Miss Dollers was residing at the Métropole Hotel, and was very anxious to make Lady Charlotte known to a compatriot staying in the same hotel, Mr. Josiah Washington Potts, quondam pork exporter in the Far West, now millionaire and gentleman, doing Europe, and bent on the purchase of a country seat in England, old furniture, a pedigree, aristocratic wife, and, if possible, baronetage. Of the likelihood of his obtaining this last he was sometimes doubtful, of the others absolutely sure.

A small banquet was inaugurated in the American's dining-room on the ground-floor of the "Métropole," at which Lady Charlotte consented to be present, and also consented to send out invitations to a few of her own friends, as Mr. Josiah Washington Potts was not richly dowered with acquaintance in London and was anxious to get into the very best society, "the corner lot," he called it. As this was a convenient manner of paying debts in the shape of dinners owing to people whom she did not much care about, Lady Charlotte was able to gather together a dozen or so wealthy, well-dressed people. Not her best friends, not the *crème de la crème*, but a few of those people who prostrated themselves at her feet in their endeavour to secure at their parties the presence of a fashionable beauty, who was known to have been admired by H.R.H.

Lady Charlotte and the friends came and feasted at the American's expense, flattered him upon the elegance of the dinner and looked askance at Letitia Dollers—that American thing in whom they saw so little to admire, and whose portraits they were sick of seeing in all the West End shops. All agreed in wondering why Lady Charlotte had taken her up, and some even declared that they knew as a fact that Miss Dollers had paid her a large sum

down to introduce her to her friends. None guessed the truth. There are wheels within wheels in the best society.

Letitia Dollers was a great success at Ascot, and Lady Charlotte was fain to rejoice over her arrangement with Mr. Crump. Her own mushroom-coloured gown was described in all the papers. Lured by the double magnet of Lady Charlotte Craddock and the more novel attraction of the beauty whom the knowing ones declared that H.R.H. had discovered at Cannes, and thus created, and of whom the same knowing ones asserted that H.R.H. had avowed that he would rather have discovered her than the whole continent of America, the choicest sprigs of nobility and the great ones of the land hovered about Lord Addlepayte's drag. Young Lord Callow's team of blacks and exquisitely-matched grooms passed unnoticed, and the reigning beauty of last year bit the tips of her Suède gloves in anger and despair at the sight of the fickle crowd with field glasses levelled and forefingers pointed at the new beauty of the season.

Before the last days of June Mr. Washington Potts had bought from its noble and impoverished owner the Tudor mansion and park known as Reminshall Abbey, Bucks. Here, in the early days of July, Mr. Potts intended to inaugurate his career as a lord of the soil. He had put the Abbey in the hands of a West End upholsterer, who had renovated whatever it was possible to renovate in the furniture, and had fitted up the Tudor building with electric light, and had done all that lay in his power to modernize and hotelify the venerable edifice. A most superior brigade of smart maidservants, lofty footmen, and an affable archangel of a butler, engaged by the house agent, amply furnished forth the servants' hall and housekeeper's room. Prancing bays, blacks and roans filled the stabling for eight horses; and half-a-dozen carriages, newly designed, and built on the latest lines, and emblazoned with the crest of a griffin rampant, which Mr. Potts had recently discovered at the College of Heraldry that he was entitled to bear for the sum of eighty guineas, filled the coach-houses. The "Mayflower," a spick-and-span steam-launch, was moored in a boat-house built on a backwater of the Thames, down to whose flowery banks stretched the lands of Reminshall Abbey. The griffin ramped on massive services of silver, glass, table linen, and cutlery. Wherever a crest *could* be placed a griffin appeared. From the chimneys and gutter-spouts, over which griffins hovered, to the ground glass windows of the butler's pantry, on which griffins were engraved, the new-made Washington Potts crest was obtrusively conspicuous.

This lordly pleasure dome and all its appendages Mr. Washington Potts had bought for himself, but before he could enjoy himself in it he required to see it filled with an elegant and well-dressed mob. To obtain this end Josiah consulted Lady Charlotte Craddock. He

went to call upon her one morning towards the end of June, and found her pale and exhausted. She had not yet recovered from an alarming interview with an irate jobmaster, who had supplied her with the pretty bays that drew her half brougham and victoria and who now threatened summonses and county courts, and —most terrible of all—threatened to send a man to take away the bays then and there unless Lady Charlotte paid him the trifling sum of £400, due by her to him for horse hire. Lady Charlotte promised to send a cheque on account by the end of the week, and rehearsed the gamut of equivocations used by people who live on credit, but Mr. Buck, of Buck and Jibb, jobmasters and horse dealers, Oxford Street, W., was not so easily pacified. "You let me 'ave a cheque for two 'undred on account before I close my office at five o'clock this afternoon, and I'll leave my 'osses in your stable; you don't, and I'll send my man for them bays, and even if they are in the Row I'll 'ave the 'arness took off and leave the carriage there. When I says a thing, I means it, and I mean that," and Mr. Buck had departed, leaving Lady Charlotte to face the full awfulness of the demand. A balance of £70 at her banker's and £200 to be paid before nightfall. It was horrid. For a few moments Lady Charlotte gave herself up to despair, but at the end of half-an-hour she had formed a desperate resolution. At first she had almost entertained the idea of failing to pay and letting the horses be taken, but the recollections of Hurlingham, where she had an engagement that very afternoon, the Row, and the thousand and one occasions when horses and a carriage are absolutely indispensable, made that impossible. No, Lady Charlotte would go to a money-lender. She knew they were disreputable, and knew that they would cheat her; but she must trust in Providence or her own wits to save her from possible worry in the future, and she must provide for the inexorable Now.

Lady Charlotte put on her oldest tailor-gown and drove in a hansom to the office of a member of the tribe of Levi, whose shining brass door-plate announced him to be a solicitor, but whose name and appearance suggested usury. After a great amount of discussion and explanation, Mr. Abraham Levi stated that he had no ready money on hand and was himself, indeed, not a money-lender, but would act in that capacity on behalf of a friend who had some few hundreds to invest. When Lady Charlotte left his office, Mr. Levi had undertaken to send a trustworthy clerk with notes for £300 to her house at three o'clock, the earliest hour by which the obliging friend could be communicated with, and his client had signed an agreement to pay monthly instalments of a hundred pounds with interest added until the debt should be paid off, the first payment to be made one month from the date of the signing of the agreement. The Hebrew solicitor, who only asked a moderate commission for his assistance, drew up an agreement so shrouded in technicalities that Lady Charlotte read and signed it in utter

unconsciousness of the fact that she was undertaking to pay 180 per cent. for the accommodation.

Lady Charlotte sent notes for £200 to Messrs. Buck and Jibb and reserved £100 for her personal use, trusting that she could ward off all large payments until the end of the season at least.

Wearied with the unusual business of the morning Lady Charlotte leaned back in a low saddlebag lounge seat and gently fanned herself as she greeted Mr. Josiah Washington Potts.

"I hear you have bought the Reminshall estate?"

"Yes, I guess I am boss of Reminshall Abbey and park. I've fixed it up and it's all comfortable now. There's a tower at one end, supposed to date from Stephen; well, I've had an elevator fitted there; electric light, electric indicators, complete telephonic communication. In fact you wouldn't know the old hole again; and now I want your ladyship to come down and stay a few weeks, or as long as you like, and to ask a party. I've asked all the people that you brought to my dinner; but they won't half fill the place; and I want to have relays of company, one batch after another, as one reads about your regular swells in the society papers. They are a sort of catechism for us self-made men and show us the way we should go if we want to be fashionable."

"Just so. But surely, my dear Mr. Potts, you have friends of your own? A man of your wealth must have made lots of friends?" answered Lady Charlotte languidly, not taking the trouble to appear interested.

"Oh, of course I've made friends among speculators and that, but they aren't what I want to know. I want the A1 brand as we used to say in the West, and I know you can bring them. I've bought a launch, and the coach that I have ordered will be down in a week; there shall be illuminations, water-parties, a ball, anything you like. You just give the word of command, and I'll see that it's done."

"It is very flattering of you to ask me, of course; but you must allow me to consider the matter. I am feeling rather exhausted now, so I regret that I cannot ask you to luncheon, but call again in a few days' time and I will let you know. Good-bye, dear Mr. Potts."

Lady Charlotte did not at first intend to accede to the American's request that she should invite her friends to his house; but a certain unanimity among her tradespeople in sending in their bills with urgent reminders during these few last days of the season, together with the threatening tones of some who declined to take any further orders until they received a settlement in full, made her decide to go to Reminshall.

"Anything would be better," she thought, "than staying here to be pestered with their letters. I can't pay them and they must know that I can't! What do they want? They can't put me in prison I suppose; or half the nobility would be in prison. Directly

I get my dividends I shall give these harpies something on account. I am sure they can't expect me to do more. I would go to the Continent, only one can't travel on credit. I suppose I had better oblige Mr. Potts." Lady Charlotte pronounced the honourable name of Potts as she might have swallowed a tonic.

So Lady Charlotte invited a large party of friends and acquaintance to meet her at Reminshall, first explaining the strange circumstances of a wealthy man, owner of a beautiful country seat and eager to fill his house with people, and yet not possessing friends enough to occupy half the spare bedrooms.

Lady Charlotte's set jeered at Mr. Washington Potts, spoke of the absurdity of the thing, and with few exceptions accepted his invitations. There were rumours of a pastoral play to be performed in the open air, and as respect for the salt is an Eastern fad and not a European fact the guests arrived bent upon amusing themselves and on being entertained, and determined to ignore all obligation to their entertainer.

Given the disposition to make merry and the wherewithal to do so, and the results are likely to be satisfactory. There were excursions by water organized with the greatest skill and precision by Mr. Potts. He was once overheard to say in disclaiming a compliment upon the subject that a man who had personally superintended the shipping of 10,000 hogs ought to be equal to shipping a few dozen swells. There were garden parties and tennis parties, dances and charades, and all Mr. Washington Potts' guests declared that Reminshall Abbey was a delightful place to stay at. But they were apt in quiet moments when the master of the house was absent to gather into little groups and discuss his peculiarities.

"The creature is so candidly vulgar," said one.

"I wonder why Lady Charlotte touts for him; she seems quite to have taken him up. He isn't in her set; I know—in fact I don't think he is in any set at all. Do you think she means to marry him for his money?"

"I should hardly think so. They say he was a pork butcher in America. Then there was Lady Charlotte's affair in India, don't you know?"

"Do you think that means anything? there always are affairs in India, don't you know, when young women go out with their husbands. So much scandal and backbiting and so little else to do, they are obliged to take refuge in flirtation." And the conversation drifted away from Lady Charlotte and her intentions.

At Mr. Washington Potts' request Lady Charlotte had undertaken the entire arrangement of the outdoor play, which was to be as near perfection as it was possible for a play upon whose production neither expense nor trouble but only genius was spared.

Lady Charlotte found most irksome the task of arranging the *al fresco* performance. The unsatisfactory state of her own affairs

made life wearisome, and the effort of joining in conversation and appearing or endeavouring to appear amused and interested soon became intolerable. The morning's post had become a thing to be dreaded and to be awaited in fear and trembling through a sleepless night. There was a sickening unanimity about her creditors. Then Crump, whom she had looked upon as her slave from the moment she had introduced Miss Dollers, had discovered that the erewhile run-after beauty was a Yankee adventuress, a New York milliner's assistant who had paid for her passage and return passage with her savings, and had arrived in England with only a few pounds and the *kudos* resulting from distinguished admiration to support her. For a few months she had been, in her own words, a big boom and had lived on credit. This credit exhausted she left the shores of Britain to indulge on the other side of the pond in many a hearty laugh at the guileless Britishers who had blindly mistaken her uncultured vulgarity for American wit.

Mad with rage when his gigantic bill was returned to him from Miss Dollers' address at the "Métropole," bearing the legend in red ink, "Left; address not known," the senior partner in Crump and Crushit wrote to Lady Charlotte Craddock to inform her ladyship that as he had lost considerably by her introduction of Miss Dollers ("as though I had wished to introduce the minx!" thought Lady Charlotte indignantly) he felt that he had a right to expect that her ladyship would help him to meet that loss by paying for the dresses that he had then in preparation. He had charged as little as possible and enclosed an account for the two dresses for the theatrical performance. Ordinarily the price asked would be eighty guineas. He would only charge seventy, and he expected a cheque immediately. The costumes would be sent by a special messenger to whom Lady Charlotte might intrust the cheque, as he would receive orders not to leave the Abbey without payment. This letter in conjunction with her utter inability to comply with its demands increased those sensations that made life and the preparations for the play a burden almost too great to bear.

As of late years charity has proved a very convenient social stepping-stone, Lady Charlotte suggested to Mr. Washington Potts that charity should be made the *raison d'être* of the performance. A ritualistic vicar of a neighbouring parish was soon found and easily persuaded that the cause of Ritualism required that in his little tumble-down and moss-grown church, with its ancient square tower lop-sided and sinking sideways into the soil, the mouldering horse-box pews should be replaced by open Gothic benches, that the damp and woolly-toned harmonium should retire in favour of an American organ. In fact, that the whole of the interior of the parish church of Sleepston, which had begun life as a Roman Catholic chapel, which had been whitewashed under Cromwell, and generally uglified by succeeding generations of

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Low Church vicars, should now be beautified and transformed into a temple of Ritualism.

There was to be no vulgar *réclame*, no one was to canvass the charity. A short paragraph in one of the best papers only would make it known that there was to be an open-air performance for the purpose of raising money for a local charity, that *fauteuils* would be three guineas, that a family ticket to admit three would be five guineas, that a special train would leave Paddington, and that two or three dozen of the more distinguished spectators would be entertained at luncheon by the master of Reminshall Abbey.

Lady Charlotte had the disposal of the tickets, and within a few days of the announcement of the performance the greater number of seats had been taken. The charge was so high people who thought ten shillings and sixpence dear for a stall at the Lyceum, felt sure the performance, although amateur, must be really worth seeing, and people not in society rushed at the bait, and a very few in society and a few on the immediate outskirts received complimentary tickets and were invited to the luncheon.

A play of the Elizabethan era was unearthed and clothed in chaste modern garb by a penniless and aristocratic younger son, who affected long hair, weird garments and a literary turn of mind, and made a little money and a great repute in his own family by contributing paragraphs to weekly papers, and who annually wrote a very weak and mystic novel, devoured by a class of reader with an appetite for anything written by an Honourable, baronet, or lady of title.

At the last rehearsals the play went smoothly, inasmuch as all the actors knew their parts. When the last rehearsal was over Lady Charlotte left the *dramatis personæ* with a weary sigh. She walked rapidly through the hall, and seeing all of the rooms occupied, fled to a small room of studious aspect, fitted up with a collection of such solid and classic literature as made Mr. Washington Potts shudder. This, of a more private nature than the rest of the sitting-rooms, had been placed exclusively at Lady Charlotte's disposal as the most distinguished guest. Like all Yankees, Mr. Potts rejoiced in a pair of pistols manufactured with all the latest improvements in deadliness. These were kept on his library table in a case, which in itself was a thing of beauty. Lady Charlotte sat down near the table, and drew the case towards her. She thought of her difficulties, of her endless struggles with insolvency and of the taste for luxury, which she felt to be her ruling passion, and for the things which only wealth can purchase, and without which she felt that for her life would always be unendurable, and she opened the inlaid case and took out one of the glittering weapons. "Perhaps, after all, *this* would be the most honourable *finale*; but I haven't the courage, I am too great a coward." Lady Charlotte put back the pistol and pushed the case away.

"No, I have not sufficient courage to do it." And then came the voice of the tempter, suggesting a temporary escape from her difficulties. The money for the charity; there it was in her jewel-case. The entertainment was in her patronage, and all the takings had been paid over to her. There was £120 in notes and gold in her room; easy to appropriate this, and tell the astute Mr. Potts that the cost of the production had swamped the takings. In the triumph of success he would be only too glad to give a cheque to the vicar, and would say no more about it. But then he might divine the truth, and he *was* so vulgar; it would be so dreadful to be under an obligation to a man who out-Yankeed even the conventional Yankee of comic drama.

Expectation was on tiptoe on the morrow. All the *dramatis personæ* were people of more or less renown, demi-celebrities, *quasi* literary men, pretty wives of celebrated artists, &c., &c. And all were anxious to distinguish themselves before an audience that had paid so much for their seats that they meant to be critical.

Early in the morning Lady Charlotte's dresses arrived from Messrs. Crump and Crushit, and her maid came to inform her that there was a gentleman from Messrs. Crump's, who said that his orders were that he was to see Lady Charlotte before he left.

After a lengthy parley with the Bond Street tailors' minion, who refused to leave the house unpaid, Lady Charlotte was fain to do that from the thought of which she had shrunk yesterday. She took £70 from the charity money, and paid and dismissed the tailor. Armed with the stamped receipt she returned to the sunny sitting-room adjoining her bedroom. Through the window she could see the preparations in progress for the play. It was a sunny, cloudless day in July. All nature looked glad, presently Lady Charlotte must be looking glad and happy.

"What fools we women of fashion are! Why can't I live on a few hundreds a year and be happy? But I can't, I can't. I should literally pine anywhere except in a house in Mayfair during the season. I don't set so much store as many ladies do on dress, but I never could be happy in a dress made by a second-rate tailor. I despise myself for accepting hospitality from this vulgar American, but my own folly, my extravagance, has made it necessary. I wonder if there are any people coming to see this play who feel as wretched as I do." Lady Charlotte went into her dressing-room and looked searchingly at her reflection in the glass; she wondered if in unguarded moments she ever looked as wretched as she felt. She smiled at the reflection and moved her lips in a polite murmur, "Yes, I can still look happy though I can't feel it. And that money I have taken to pay that wretched tailor! I suppose I must sell the few remaining diamonds that I possess and refund it. Every one will know how miserably poor I am then. It will be dreadful to wear no rings except a wedding ring and a guard like a lodging-house keeper."

In the midst of her reflections the smart and tight-waisted young person who waited on her knocked at the door.

"I won't dress now, Howden, I shan't come down to breakfast," Lady Charlotte said, as the maid entered. "Bring me a cup of tea, and you can say I am studying my part."

She would certainly need all her energy to play her social part from luncheon to midnight, as well as the dramatic rôle, so Lady Charlotte had resolved to husband her powers.

"I beg your pardon, your ladyship, but there's another young man downstairs says he must see you, and, if you please, here is his card."

The maid gave her a thin, badly-printed card, suggesting the Crystal Palace or Brighton Pier advertisements of "Ladies' and gents' visiting cards, 50 while you wait, one shilling."

Lady Charlotte read :

"Mr. Isaac Hart,"

and under the name was written in pencil,

"From Mr. Abraham Levi."

"Tell him I am engaged and cannot see him, but will write and make an appointment."

"He says he won't stir until he has seen your ladyship."

"You can show him into the study, I will see him there." Lady Charlotte tied the ribbons of her embroidered morning-gown angrily. "These people will drive me mad," she muttered, "and it is my own doing. That is the dreadful part of it."

Lady Charlotte Craddock looked very firm and resolute as she opened the door of the study. Mr. Isaac Hart stood by the window; a remarkably curly-brimmed hat perched sideways on his oily, raven ringlets; a large diamond ring garnished the little finger of a hand not conspicuous for cleanliness; the brilliant pink scarf round his throat was fastened through a large jewelled brooch in front—the *tout ensemble* indeed was not engaging. He turned round without taking off his hat, and with insolent familiarity greeted Lady Charlotte.

"Good morning, Lady Charlotte. Fine grounds, these of Potts'."

"I have no time to waste, Mr."—Lady Charlotte read the name on the card before throwing it into a waste-paper basket—"Hart; please give me any message your employer may have intrusted to you."

"My employer, as you call him, gave me this little bill, which fell due the day before yesterday, and as your ladyship did not condescend to answer his little note, or to let 'my employer' know when you *was* a-going to pay him the monthly instalment as is due, why I've come on my employer's behalf to collect that sum."

"You may tell Mr. Levi that I am quite unable to pay at

present, he must wait if he ever hopes to receive payment in full. He can make me bankrupt if he likes, and then he will get nothing; but as the interest he charges is rather more usurious than even the worst of his tribe's, I don't suppose he will care to see the exact amount in print. I am sorry I cannot pay this month, but it will be more to Mr. Levi's interest to leave me in peace."

"Mr. Levi can judge for himself what is to his own interest, and he says he must have the money as is owing to him. So if your ladyship really don't want to waste time, you had better just hand over the money and take this here stamped acknowledgment."

Lady Charlotte had taken a seat near the table, and, as yesterday, had drawn the ornamental inlaid pistol-case towards her. She took out one of the weapons gingerly and carefully, as one unacquainted with the mysterious ways of firearms; she sat for a few moments with the pistol in her hand, the muzzle towards herself, and looked at it absently without speaking.

The Israelite soon showed signs of impatience.

"I think as you said you don't want to waste no time, Lady Charlotte. I don't neither. Are you going to give me that money?"

"No; it is not in my power to do so. You may tell Mr. Levi that when I can pay I will."

"But Mr. Levi told me to stay here until you did pay."

"Your staying here would do no good to Mr. Levi. If he will accept payment when convenient, all well and good; if not, the Bankruptcy Court is open to me. Your remaining here is an impertinence which will do Mr. Levi no good, and if I complain to Mr. Potts of your intrusion his servants will turn you out. You will be so good, therefore, as to leave the house at once."

"I don't leave the house without the money. Your ladyship must have lots of swell friends here who would lend you the money. Surely you know of some one who would settle this little business for you."

"I know of no one," said Lady Charlotte with a weary air. She looked at the pistol turned towards her breast. Perhaps it was loaded! Surely if it were it would be better just to raise it to her temples and with one little jerk end this miserable sordid struggle, this endless vexation about money, *money, money!* She hated the word. If only she had been rich in her own right! She had never been wicked or done anything really wrong, and yet life was rapidly becoming living torture, and all because of the miserable lack of money. Ah! what had she done that she should be made so miserable?

"I think your ladyship must know a friend who could help you in this little difficulty," the oily, nasal accents of the Israelite broke in upon Lady Charlotte's meditations. "I have heard it said that it's well beknown who really is the boss of Reminshall

Abbey. Don't you think as Mr. Potts would settle this little matter? I have heard it said as there's more than friendship betwixt——"

There was something so revoltingly insolent in the man's look and manner, that his meaning flashed across Lady Charlotte's mind long ere the effect of his mere words could have done. Her face, which had been pale before, grew paler; she leapt out of her seat, pointed the revolver full at the man, and before she could fully realize the situation, she felt her hand violently jerked upwards, there was a flash, smoke, a report, and a dull thud as Mr. Isaac Hart fell to the ground.

Only for a moment did Lady Charlotte lose her presence of mind. The pistol dropped from her hand, she felt sick and giddy, but a gentle gust of summer air blowing in through the lace curtains revived her. She looked down at the man lying on the floor face upwards. "Good God! I have committed murder!" she cried, and rushed to the door and locked it. Then she knelt beside the man and fanned him with some papers from the table, but there was no sign of life. Looking round, she caught sight of some roses in a valuable crackle jar on the mantelshef; she threw the roses out and poured some water over the forehead and behind the ears, as she remembered people had done to her when she fainted. Presently the man stirred ever so slightly and opened his eyes. "Thank Heaven!" she thought, "he is alive at least. If he dies I have committed murder, but there shall be as little *esclandre* as possible." Lady Charlotte unlocked the door and locked it again on the outside, and ran until she reached the hall. There she met a footman carrying a breakfast-tray.

"Where is your master?" she said, endeavouring to conceal her agitation, though she feared the loud beating of her heart must betray her.

"He is in his room, my lady."

"Then show me the way to his room at once. Put your tray down anywhere. I must go to him at once."

The footman stared at Lady Charlotte in speechless surprise.

"My master never sees any one except his secretary before he comes down to breakfast, my lady."

"Never mind, I must see him at once." Lady Charlotte could with difficulty preserve her composure. That man in the study might be dying while she was parleying with the footman. She took a slender gold bracelet from her wrist. "There, you may have that to give to your young woman; and now show me the way at once. I am in a great hurry."

The man put down his tray and bounded upstairs. Lady Charlotte ran after him. The footman stopped and pointed to a door hung with heavy folds of drapery.

"That is the sitting-room Mr. Potts uses, and his dressing-room opens out of it. He may be in either."

Lady Charlotte drew aside the curtain, knocked at the door, and, hardly waiting for an answer, went in.

"Heavy hogs lively, lard brisk and energetic in sympathy with hogs. Light hogs flexible and subject to reaction." Mr. Washington Potts was dictating a letter to his secretary when Lady Charlotte broke in.

"Dear Mr. Potts, I must speak to you alone for one moment. Please send this gentleman away."

"Stimpson, just you wait for me in my dressing-room for a few minutes. And now what can I do for your ladyship? I calculate you're the boss of me and this establishment, so just give me your orders."

At the word "boss" Lady Charlotte shuddered. That dreadful man downstairs, lying dead perhaps, had said the same thing. Decidedly she had been imprudent, and allowed misconceptions to arise. Once this business set to rights, she would drop this Yankee. People must not begin to talk about her.

Lady Charlotte explained the situation truthfully. She reflected that if the man downstairs should die, and she, an earl's daughter, were to be accused of murder, it would matter little who knew what she had done. There would be but one course open to her, and that the course she had shrunk from taking yesterday as a means of escape from worry.

Lady Charlotte wanted Mr. Potts to send for a doctor and to have the wounded man tended, and to keep the rest of the house in ignorance of the occurrence. She would play her part in the piece as though nothing had happened; no one would be able to guess from her appearance that anything unusual had taken place.

"And when the play is over I calculate you'll be wanting to make tracks?" said Mr. Potts coolly.

"On the contrary, if the injury should prove fatal, I will swear not to leave the house."

Mr. Potts sat silent and horrified, but only for a few moments. "I hook on," he said at last. "If the worst comes to the worst, I'll stand your friend. Stimpson shall help me carry the man here; we'll do it between us. I'll send a two-wheel cart for the doctor; everything shall be done for this man, and I guess that smart young woman as fixes you up had better turn nurse and do the nursing. That'll keep it private. You go to your room, and the less you appear to suspect a mystery, the better it will be for all jokers."

Even in her gratitude at the wealthy American's sympathy, Lady Charlotte shuddered at his vernacular. She went to her room and sat down, feeling sick with fear and horror. Had she committed a murder? How could she allow herself to be provoked to such an extent by a low-minded, money-lending Jew? What next misfortune *could* overwhelm her? She had lately considered herself specially marked by Destiny to be annoyed.

For a long time she sat in deep but distracted thought. She felt sometimes as though her brain would burst. A dozen times she got up and rushed to the door to do she knew not what. Once she opened the window wide and looked down at the marble terrace below. "It must be quite thirty feet," she thought, "and instant death, but how dreadful! No, I have not the courage for it that way."

A housemaid knocked at the door. "Oh, if you please, your ladyship, Mr. Potts says can I help you dress. Miss Howden, he says, is a-nursing Mr. Stimpson, as has been taken ill in master's room."

Lady Charlotte looked at her watch. "Quarter to twelve, and the play commences at three, and I suppose the people come about one. Yes, I suppose I had better dress now. That will be better than doing nothing and thinking and thinking until I must go mad."

Her toilette concluded, Lady Charlotte sat opposite her glass in doubt and hesitation. She looked at her reflection—a graceful figure in soft white silk—but a ghastly pallor, which seemed to be accentuated by those white draperies, frightened her. "I look as though I had committed a murder," she thought. "People would guess as much from my appearance." There was ever present to her mind a series of pictures, beginning with a trial for murder in which she would be designated by the council for the prosecution as the woman Craddock, and culminating in a gibbet and an audience of press-men at that final scene.

Lady Charlotte sat till nearly one, when a maid-servant brought her a note from the master of the house. It was in the secretary's handwriting, neither addressed nor signed.

"That is kind," thought Lady Charlotte bitterly; "Mr. Potts does not want to create incriminating evidence."

"The groom who went for the doctor did not find him at home, he had to drive on to Maidenhead to find another, so there has been delay in getting assistance. Mr. Hart has been conscious some time and has taken brandy which we poured down his throat. I will let you know in the course of the afternoon how matters progress. It will be better if you are seen everywhere in the grounds during the afternoon and evening. Your maid tells me that no one heard the report of the pistol except herself; the heavy *portières* must have deadened the sound."

With a little rouge Lady Charlotte concealed the deadly pallor, which she felt must otherwise attract universal attention. She asked the same maid-servant who had brought her the note to bring her some brandy, and, after swallowing what seemed to be an enormous quantity, she summoned up all her courage to leave her room and join the crowd downstairs.

Everything had been so well prepared beforehand that nothing was left to be arranged on the last day. A blazing July sun poured down on the grounds of Reminshall Abbey, and the little glen arranged for the performance was the only shady nook within the cultivated part of the grounds immediately surrounding the house.

Towards three the carriages belonging to that part of the audience who had paid for their seats began to arrive. Rich City men with their wives and daughters in ultra-fashionable bonnets and dresses, wives of doctors who had already reached that high footing on the medical ladder exemplified by residence in Harley Street, but not that proud eminence which means appearing in print amongst the favoured few who sign the daily bulletins of the illnesses of great ones; wives of barristers and many others who liked to see a dull play without the faintest spark of interest poorly performed by an absolutely inefficient though eminently aristocratic *corps dramatique*. These gathered in great force. They peered into everything; anxious to discover how the new millionaire did things. The daughters took mental notes of the housemaids' and ladies' maids' caps and aprons, and secretly resolved to confection caps and aprons identically the same for their own handmaidens for "Ma's next party." The men thought the ribbon-bordering poor and not equal to that in their own gardens at Norwood and Sydenham. The matrons, in the main, employed themselves in speculating as to how much the whole thing had cost to get up, and many came to the conclusion that the ices and refreshments alone, which were gratis, must have swamped the takings, so of course the charity must go to the wall. That really was of no consequence. Nobody even knew where the church was, or cared, except a few local magnates, and they were bidden to the feast and performance free of expense.

The exhumed pastoral Elizabethan drama in its new dress progressed rapidly. The amateur artistes had not acquired the art of ladling out the sentences slowly as though they were loath to part with a line of their parts after the fashion of the modern psychological dramatic school; and, either from a nervous longing to get to the end and hide themselves, or from a desire to say it all before they forgot it, the piece played very rapidly.

Lady Charlotte got through her part not brilliantly, but no worse than the rest, though she felt that a lifetime's agony was compressed into the three hours occupied by the play and *entr'actes*. Towards the end of the last act, when she had grown accustomed to the appearance of the audience and had the hardihood to look it in the face and recognize individuals, her eyes suddenly fell upon the owner of Reminshall Abbey. He was sitting on a seat at the end of the front row, the end nearest the Abbey. The hero of the play was indulging in a long meandering soliloquy during which at rehearsals Lady Charlotte had been coached to occupy her-

self with elaborate stage business, but had forgotten all her coaching. She felt her eyes fixed on Mr. Potts. A servant in gorgeous livery, with much mysterious and apparently meaningless gold ornamentation dropping from one shoulder, came rapidly towards his master. The servant bent down with that remarkable air of blended mystery and respect peculiar to the well-mannered-footman and murmured what seemed to Lady Charlotte a long communication.

Mr. Washington Potts looked serious and said a few words to the servant, and stood up and moved a few steps in the direction of the house.

Lady Charlotte felt her heart beating furiously. She thought she could divine what the message was. Mr. Potts was wanted in the house, the man was worse, dying perhaps, and the police had come to take his depositions.

For a few moments there was silence on the stage—that dreadful stage-wait of private theatricals when all the actors with the exception of the unconscious offender look the picture of silent misery. Lady Charlotte was the offender. She stood with her cheeks ghastly beneath the rouge, her eyes fixed upon Mr. Washington Potts and the servant.

"I knew it. He is *dead*—I have murdered him," she cried in a hoarse, awful voice, and fell prone on the stage.

The play, owing in the first place to its exceeding dulness and in the second to its very weak representation, had from the beginning been incomprehensible, so most of the audience applauded to the echo, under the impression that this was the first fine piece of acting in the play. The other actors, better informed, rushed forward and raised the still form, some ran and fetched iced water with which to bathe the temples.

Mr. Washington Potts jumped on to the stage, and helped one of the actors to carry Lady Charlotte to the house. Once on the sofa, being fanned by the attentive American, she soon revived and opened her eyes.

"Where am I?" she murmured. "Is it the prison?"

"No, Lady Charlotte, you are not in prison, nor you ain't going to be, after the message I sent you just before the piece began."

"What message? I got no message."

"Didn't that damned flunkey tell you? I'll give him an eye-opener when next I come across my gentleman. Well, I guess you've got the bulge of that Jew fellow, Lady Charlotte. Why, one of my fellows found a bullet in my saddle-bag arm-chair, and he brought it to me in a fright. Ah, says I, Lady Charlotte must have meant to polish him off, for she's let off two charges. However, I got the idea as I might as well look at the revolver; so I took it and let it off in a haystack for safety. Five good charges in it. Do you hook on? Well, in I ran, told Mr. Stimpson, and we set to pouring brandy down the Hebrew gentleman's throat.

He had swooned with fright, and when the doctor came he said as how he would suffer from the shock maybe for a few days, but he'd be all right after. 'Well, then I turned to and blackguarded him for coming here insulting my guests, and soon he let on all he knew about your dealings with Mr. Abraham Levi. Well, I've settled that account, and I've given Mr. Hart a cheque for fifty to get back his pluck with, and he's given me a stamped agreement never to trouble either you or me again.'

It was some time before Lady Charlotte could fully realize the true state of affairs. For so many dreadful hours, that seemed like centuries, she had looked upon herself as the prisoner in the dock on trial for murder. Was her hair white? She had heard of hair turning white in a single night from terror. Surely the torture she had endured while acting in that dreadful play must have bleached her hair.

Lady Charlotte's hair had not lost its rich colour, nor her reason its sway. Urged by the Yankee to confess her motive for dealing with gentlemen of the Abraham Levi type, she admitted that she was on the verge of distraction and that her affairs were in a hopeless muddle, which meant that she owed thousands and hadn't a hundred clear in the world.

"I suppose you would think it sorter a drop in life to marry me, and have your debts cleared and paid off down to a farthing, and have an allowance of six hundred a year to dress on; always supposing as you will stake your honour not to run into debt again, or deal with Abraham Levis."

There was plenty of gossip for the first few weeks at Trouville; and for the very earliest of the grouse shooting the Washington Potts marriage filled every mouth that had any right to consider itself in or near society.

Lady Charlotte Craddock had married the great American pork dealer. The *trousseau* had been a nine days' wonder. Crump and Crushit ground their teeth when they heard of the afternoon tea offered by Messrs. Fitt and Squeeze, of Audley Street, to the chief of their customers, who were invited to view the *chef d'œuvres* of the *trousseau* of the season.

Mr. Washington Potts was only once heard to say, in strictest confidence, that of all his British purchases, *many* of which might have made a nigger's hair uncurl, he was bound to state that his British wife had nighest broke him, but that he was that set on her, he would have risked his bottom dollar to secure her.

Lady Charlotte Washington (the Potts very soon ceased to be part of her name) was never again heard to speak of the Yankee's vulgarity. She would, it is true, occasionally allude to her husband's quaint Americanisms. She possessed a little sheaf of stamped documents in her desk; they represented the price an American millionaire had paid to obtain a high-bred British wife, and the sum total of these documents could not be expressed in less than

five figures. She became the patroness of all 4th of July proceedings in London, and among her acquaintance on the other side of the Channel, was supposed to be mistress of the most sumptuously decorated mansion and the largest pin money of any other woman in the American's Paradise. Can earth show greater happiness?

OUR FRIENDS IN THE HUNTING FIELD.

By MRS. EDWARD KENNARD,

AUTHOR OF "THE GIRL IN THE BROWN HABIT," "KILLED IN THE OPEN,"
"A CRACK COUNTY," ETC., ETC., ETC.

PART IV.

1.—THE "FUNK-STICK."

OF all the people who come out hunting, no one is so sincerely to be pitied as the "Funk-stick." In every respect he is a most miserable man, full of abject fears of which he is horribly ashamed, yet which he cannot conquer or conceal by any effort. Constitutional timidity renders him a perfect martyr. Only the unfortunate wretch himself knows the agonies of mind which he endures—the doubts, the terrors, the dismal forebodings of imaginary danger, worse even than actual disaster. Why he hunts is a mystery; since, far from giving pleasure, the chase affords him nothing but pain. The only solution of the problem seems to be that years and custom have made him a complete slave to habit, and he has not sufficient moral courage to break away from the chains by which he is bound. Besides, he has no other resources, and hunting is a means of killing time. Yet what tortures the poor man undergoes. He wakes early in the morning with an oppressive feeling that something very unpleasant is going to happen during the day, and before his eyes are thoroughly open he remembers with a sinking spirit what that something is.

Hounds meet at the kennels, after not having been able to hunt for over a week on account of severe frost, which has now disappeared. He feels like a man who, having obtained a short reprieve, is suddenly informed that his last hour is come.

Good heavens! how abominably fresh the horses will be, after standing idle in their stable for so long. No amount of talking ever can persuade the factotum who presides over his equine department to give them enough work. It is useless trying to impress upon him that four hours' daily exercise is but just sufficient to keep an animal in good health. And now he will have to suffer from the vagaries of his steeds. The mere thought is terrifying.

He had decided over night to ride a recent purchase, a beautiful blood mare, but that was after dinner. In the morning he repents this determination, and feels that nothing shall induce him to get on her back until he knows a great deal more about her. She is certain to kick him off, or buck, or shy, or rear, or indulge in some equally alarming antic. He knows beforehand that his groom will receive the message contemptuously, but he cannot help it. For a time he struggles against his fears, but in the end he has to succumb to them, and sends out word to say that he has changed his mind, and will hunt Rochester, a confidential animal approaching his twentieth year, instead of Queen Bess.

The reply is that Rochester has been out exercising, and owing to the slippery state of the ground it would be unadvisable to hunt a horse whose forelegs are shaky and liable at any moment to give way altogether. The "Funk-stick" is quite aware of this fact, without hearing it repeated; but what is he to do? It is easier for him to buy a new hunter than to summon up courage to ride a fresh one, and of all his stud, Rochester is the animal he feels least afraid of. So Rochester, in spite of having been fed and watered, is saddled and our hero starts in fear and trembling. It is a gusty morning, and a cold north-east wind comes sweeping over the uplands. The old horse, not liking the sharp air after his warm stable, rounds his back a bit, going down the first hill from home.

Oh! what an agonizing pang shoots knife-like through the heart of his rider! That gentleman feels positively *ill* with apprehension, and from moment to moment anticipates some frightful calamity. He is far too uneasy to enter into conversation with any of the numerous acquaintances who overtake him. If the truth were known he is downright afraid to let his animal break into a canter. The awful shadow of "what might happen" weighs upon his spirit like a ton of lead. He cannot shake off its depressing influence. His nerves quiver, his teeth chatter, but not from the cold alone. Other causes tend to produce this result, though his pallid cheek flushes red with shame as he puts a name to them. He is too anxious to be able to talk, and the only remark he can jerk out to his friends as they pass by is:

"Awfully bad going to-day. The ground is in a most dangerous condition."

"Nonsense, my good fellow!" they laugh back in reply; "you'll soon forget all about it when hounds run. It's more slippery on the roads than anywhere else. Come, hurry up or you'll be late."

He shakes his head and gives a melancholy smile. If anything were to prevent his hunting that day he knows he should not be sorry. It's all very well for other people to "hurry up," but how can he? Were he to do so, Rochester might whisk his tail, cock his ears, or misdeemean himself generally. Such danger is too great to be

lightly incurred. By immense caution he hopes to be able to avert it.

His troublesome heart goes thump, thump against his ribs, when at length he is forced to quit the safe and friendly road and strike across a line of bridle-gates and fields. The latter are dotted with horsemen and women on their way out to covert, and at sight of them and of the fresh green pastures, Rochester distends his nostrils, snorts, and oh, dear! oh, dear! proceeds to give a little playful bound into the air. Our hero immediately commences hauling frantically at his head, and in an agonized voice cries out with stentorian lungs: "Quiet, horse! oh, do, *do* be quiet!"

Every one explodes with laughter, and even Rochester seems to feel a contempt for his rider, for unheeding this beseeching appeal, he snatches at the bit, breaks into a canter, and out of pure light-heartedness, gives another flourish of his heels.

Tears start to the wretched "Funk-stick's" eyes; he is so desperately frightened. His first instinct is to dismount and walk home, but people surround him on all sides. Surreptitiously he manages to wipe away the signs of his weakness and blows his nose with great energy and determination. Arrived at the meet, things do not improve. Neither does his courage, which by this time has reached a very low ebb. That old brute Rochester refuses to stand still for a second. He sidles about, paws the ground and edges up to the hounds in a most alarming and disagreeable fashion. In fact, he keeps his unhappy rider in a constant state of trepidation. The "What might happen," is rapidly being magnified into the "What will and must happen."

By this time the poor "Funk-stick" is so nervous that he is reduced to a state of almost absolute silence. He has no longer any spirit or inclination to converse, and is not a good enough actor to dissemble how much he suffers. His craven fear renders him more or less callous of appearances. It dominates his whole nature and crushes every other emotion by its overwhelming strength.

He cruelly disappoints those ladies of his acquaintance who do not know him intimately. Meeting him in a country house or at a dinner party, they may have voted him a cheery, pleasant fellow; for off a horse he is a completely different man. Out hunting, they ask themselves what on earth has come to him? He seems to avoid their society, has not a word to say for himself and only just escapes being downright rude. How could they ever have fancied he was nice, and capable of being converted into a husband?

Poor "Funk-stick!" If only they could look down into the depths of his shifting quicksand of a heart—a thing as lightly ruffled as a blade of grass by every passing wind—and were aware of the torturing fears disturbing it, no doubt their compassion

would be aroused and they would pity rather than blame its unhappy owner.

Unhappy truly, for he is the possessor of a peculiarly sensitive nature and despises his own cowardice, even whilst he succumbs to it. The efforts he makes to conceal this terrible infirmity are as pathetic as they are futile. He will talk ever so bravely when an absolutely unjumpable country lies before him, and he knows that the whole Field will be forced to fall back on a line of gates. He rides up then in a tremendous hurry and pushes through with the first half-dozen, looking complacently round when a check occurs, as much as to say, "Ha, ha! who is up?" He does his very best to make a show of gallantry when he is perfectly certain that no calls will be made upon his courage.

If he gets hold of a sympathetic listener, he will tell him quite gravely that he is only prevented from jumping owing to having sprained a muscle in his thigh, which causes exquisite agony; or that he has knocked his knee very badly against a gate-post and injured the cartilage; or run a thorn into his great toe, or a variety of different excuses. He is seldom at a loss to explain how he would if he could, but doesn't because he mayn't. He tries hard to keep up a semblance of valour, but only complete strangers are deceived by his statements.

His form is known to a nicety, and if the truth must be told, many of his comrades in the hunting field look upon him with profound contempt. To see him turn away from a fence when half-a-dozen women and children have been over it, is certainly not calculated to inspire much respect for his manliness or courage. He is, indeed, a real object of pity.

Unluckily the "Funk-stick" possesses a considerable influence.

There are always a large number of people who fluctuate between the borderland of bravery and cowardice, and to whom example is extremely contagious. Their attitude is determined by their environments, and, like sheep, they follow the leader.

Now, when our friend "Funk-stick" enters a field, and not seeing an easy egress, at once begins calling out, "Don't go there; don't go there. I know that place of old, and it's a most horrible one to jump," a very numerous contingent scuttle off in his footsteps, not even waiting to see if he speaks the truth. Their anxiety has been aroused, and they prefer to avoid the danger rather than face it. In truth, it is a comical sight to see the whole of the "Funk-stick" division stopped by some little, insignificant gap, and to witness the cautious way in which, after many peeps and much hesitation, the bravest member will proceed to dismount, clear all the thorns away, then walk over on foot, dragging his horse behind him, to an accompanying chorus of "Bravas! Bravas!" He has shown them the thing can be done, and some even pluck up sufficient spirit to follow his example on horseback.

Time seems of no importance to this gallant brigade when they come to a fence. They plant themselves before it, with a species of dogged patience, and would wait all day rather than have to jump it. They bore, and creep, and crawl and scramble; but they have a rooted objection to a *bonâ fide* leap. Very few venture on so desperate a deed.

But if they lose precious moments at their fences, the rush they make for a road is something truly magnificent. An avalanche let loose is a joke to them, and our "Funk-stick," suddenly turned brave, heads the cavalcade. Nevertheless, he derives little enjoyment from these wild gallops over the macadam. His conscience accuses him all the while, and scoffs at his timidity. It leaves him no peace, for craven fear, such as his, brings its own punishment.

As a matter of fact, the pains he endures are something inconceivable, whilst the efforts he makes, the resolutions he forms to master his nervousness are quite pitiable; for they never lead to any improvement. The truth is, he can't help himself: it all comes to that.

He has been born with a shrinking, easily-frightened nature, and it cleaves to him even in manhood. How gladly would he change it if he could; but he can't. The mysterious laws which govern the universe are too strong for him. His mother may have received a shock before his birth, his nurse may have frightened him in early childhood by stories of ghosts and supernatural beings. There are always a hundred outside causes to account for the result. Timorous the "Funk-stick" was brought into the world, and timorous he will go out of it, dreading death even more than he dreads a big fence, and yielding up his feeble life in an agony of apprehension.

Poor man! poor "Funk-stick!"

Is it generous, or even fair, to despise him as much as we only too often do?

He, like the rest of us, is but a creature of chance, of circumstance and above all of evolution. How can it affect his stronger-nerved brethren if he prefers gates to hedges, roads to fields? Surely every one may hunt in the manner that pleases him or her best, without being abused and turned into thinly-disguised ridicule.

No doubt, a man worthy of the name should possess his fair share of courage; but if he hasn't got it—and many haven't—is it his fault?

No, certainly not. He did not elect to be born a coward of his own free-will, but had no choice in the matter. As a rule, the "Funk-stick" will escape unkind criticism if he has but the good sense to hold his tongue and makes no attempt to magnify his own indifferent performances. If he is humble, and does not pretend to any mock heroism, then the majority of his

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fellow-sportsmen will let him off easily enough. They are seldom venomous unless roused by petty trickery and imposture.

But if he is not only a "Funk-stick," but an impudent braggart into the bargain, then woe be to him. He will meet with merciless scorn, scathing ridicule, and infinite contempt. Even the fair sex will turn against him, for if there is one thing that British men and women hate more than another, that thing is humbug.

It is fatal to make out you ride well when you don't, to boast when you have absolutely nothing to boast about, and to glorify yourself into a lion when you are only a very, very weakly little mouse.

2.—THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

WE cannot help admiring the man who goes first, in spite of his courage being sometimes dashed with a touch of brutality; but the Good Samaritan commands a still higher regard. Our hearts swell with love and gratitude whenever we think of him, and of his numerous acts of self-sacrifice. How often has he not helped us out of an emergency, or come to the rescue when we are in serious difficulties? He is literally brimming over with the milk of human kindness, and there is nothing on earth that he will not do to assist a fellow-creature.

Other men go wild about sport, and when hounds are running hard become so infected by the enthusiasm of the passing hour as to appear dead to all external sentiments; but he would let hounds, fox, huntsman go to the dogs rather than lose an opportunity of helping suffering humanity. If we fall at a fence, it is invariably the Good Samaritan who picks us up. If our horse gallops wildly off, he pursues him for miles, and never rests until he brings him back to his owner; and if the unlucky steed tumbles into a deep ditch, and cannot be extricated except by rope and spade, he cheerfully gives up his day's pleasuring and sticks to you like a man and a Briton. He trots off to find labourers, sets everybody to work, gives the right instructions in the midst of a Babel of tongues, and of contrary opinions, and will not hear of leaving you until everything is well, and the animal saved from his perilous position. If he fancies you are hurt, he will ride all the way home with, and take almost as much care of you as a mother does of a child. In more serious cases, he gallops on ahead to fetch the doctor, and has everything prepared before your arrival. He is the kindest, the best, and most unselfish fellow in the world, and never seems to think of himself; all his thoughts and energies are concentrated on aiding other people.

Does he meet with gratitude? Alas! not much. Who does in this world? He deserves immense credit, and, comparatively speaking, gets very little.

The fact is his many good actions are performed so quietly and

unostentatiously, he regards them so entirely as a matter of course, that after a while folks adopt the same opinion. They see no reason whatever why he should not be allowed to open gates for the whole field, and let everybody pass through, if it pleases him. Of course, he wouldn't do so if he didn't like it; they would not, and they judge him by themselves—a very common way of jumping at conclusions. On the same principle, if he chooses to dismount at every awkward fence that proves a "stopper" and tear away the binders until an easy passage is made, there can be no possible reason why they should not take advantage of his good-nature without necessarily being obliged to wait and help him to re-mount. *They* did not ask him to get down; he did it of his own accord.

All the same, very few people go out hunting who, either directly or indirectly, do not profit by the presence of the Good Samaritan. He is the least aggressive or intrusive of men, yet whenever a little timely assistance is required he seems, as it were, to drop from the clouds.

The ladies regard him with peculiar tenderness, and he inspires quite a fraternal sentiment amongst their ranks. He is not a person to flirt with, but he is a person always to apply to in case of need. His staidness and solidity give a wonderful sense of protection. They feel safe and well cared for when riding about with him.

They know that if their girths want tightening, or their stirrup shortening, and they appeal to their husbands and brothers, grumpy words are likely to be the result. It is no light matter to ask most men to help a female in distress. She feels the aid is given grudgingly, and a black mark, so to speak, is scored up against her in the future, as a bother and a nuisance.

But the Good Samaritan has no black marks. He never thinks that he is wasting his time, losing his place, or falling to the rear, when it is within his power to administer to the wants of others. Such reflections do not cross his mind. He is only too happy to be of use, and gives his services in a generous, ungrudging and uncalculating spirit.

With the farmers he is most popular, and justly so, for they have a rare friend in him. He is always the first to cry out "Ware wheat," and to check the too impetuous ardour of the field, when galloping helter-skelter over some poor man's growing crops. He shows his forethought and consideration in a hundred different ways, and always has the agriculturist's interest at heart. Would that his example were more frequently followed by those who profess to be good sportsmen, but who think of nothing save their own personal amusement, and whose sole idea is to out-do their companions.

If some rough, young colt escapes from the hovel in which it has taken shelter, our Good Samaritan, heedless that the chase is

sweeping on, will at once ride after it, and drive it back again ; or he will stand, cracking his whip, in order to prevent a flock of sheep from getting through a gateway, quite unmoved by the sight of all his comrades hastening ahead with feverish speed.

When the lambing season comes round, it is no uncommon thing for him to dismount from his horse, pick up some poor, frightened little wanderer in his arms, and restore it to the bleating and anxious mother, who dares not approach within a certain distance of those terrifying hounds.

If any stranger comes out hunting, having forgotten his sandwich case and flask, our friend immediately offers him the contents of his own, and insists on his going shares, even if he does not empty them entirely.

"But, my dear sir, I am depriving you," remonstrates the stranger feebly.

"Pooh, pooh, what does that matter?" comes the generous answer. "Never mind about me."

The virtues of the Good Samaritan are more than ever conspicuous at a fence. It is impossible to abstain from recognizing them. When others are bustling, shoving, swearing, he remains perfectly calm, is never in a hurry, consequently never jealous nor unfair like a large proportion of hunting people. If he sees any one battling with a fractious steed, even although he be but a rough rider in everybody's way, he will always yield his place with a benevolent courtesy, admirable in its total self-abnegation. And even when folks who have not the excuse of an unmanageable horse take mean advantage of his good nature, as they frequently do, the only reproof they elicit is a "Go on, go on, I can wait, and apparently you can't."

He rides his animals with care, and as one who loves them. He could no more bully and abuse them, as some men do, than fly. Indeed, few things excite his anger more than to see a poor brute hit fiercely over the head, or jobbed viciously in the mouth, simply because, with the best will in the world, it may happen to have made some slight mistake over a fence. His honest face grows red with indignation at the sight, and although not given to judging his neighbours severely, he turns away, feeling an instinctive dislike for the rider, in whom his swift perceptions tell him some manly element is wanting.

When any casualty occurs the Good Samaritan is always to the fore, irrespective of class or persons. A groom, riding a wild young horse, tears through a blind ditch, and rolls head-over-heels, breaking three ribs in his fall. The man lies motionless on the ground, his limbs doubled up in a horrible, tortuous manner, and looks like one from whom the life has departed. The foremost horsemen draw rein, glance at him commiseratingly, and exclaim, "Ah, poor fellow! He's Mr. So-and-so's groom." Then ride off, as if fearful of being detained. Of course if they were wanted

they would stop ; but no doubt there are plenty of people to look after him, and, moreover, hounds have just picked up the line, and appear as if they were settling to their work in earnest.

Such reasoning as this does not hold good with our kind-hearted Samaritan. To him a man with three broken ribs is a man, whether he be a poor groom or a rich duke. In truth, he would rather help the former, for if his grace were to fall only too many friends would immediately rush to his assistance, whereas plain John Smith is passed by a score of cavaliers who all leave it to some one else to pick him up.

So our friend dismounts from his horse, raises the fallen man's shoulders, rests them against his knee, gives the sufferer a drop of brandy out of his flask, and, aided by three stout kindly farmers, proceeds to carry him on a hurdle to the nearest cottage, where they tenderly deposit their semi-conscious burden on an old horse-hair couch. This done, he rides off in search of a medical man, and makes arrangements about procuring a trap. He thinks nothing whatever of giving up his day's sport, and all his energies are absorbed in trying to ease the wounded man, and, if possible, to save him pain. And though John Smith is only a groom occupying a humble sphere in life, he has a heart, and is much more touched by and grateful for kindness than many a fine gentleman, who looks upon it as his right and his due, and forgets the services rendered directly he regains his health.

But the Good Samaritan never expects thanks. They make him feel shy and uncomfortable, for to do good comes naturally to him. It is a heaven-born instinct, and in gratifying it he only follows the promptings of his nature. He possesses a fine-fibred and chivalrous disposition, which renders him a veritable King Arthur of the hunting field. He has not a mean or ignoble thought. His great tender heart is easily moved to pity, and suffering in any form never fails to appeal to it. All his strength he places at the service of the weak, deeming it a strong man's part to protect women and children, youths and dumb animals, instead of profiting by their feebleness to display his superior might.

What matters it if the kindness of his spirit prevents him from riding very hard, or if he is giving up places when he ought to be stealing them, making way instead of pushing forward, quietly effacing himself in lieu of struggling with his neighbours at a gateway ?

Others may jump fences that he has not even seen. They may have been with hounds, occupying a glorious position in the van, whilst he was plodding away in the rear picking up cripples. They have the honour of seeing the fox dismembered, and he is trotting about, shutting farmers' gates and otherwise attending to their property.

What of that ?

Whether he be first or last, he is the finest gentleman in the whole of the hunting field, and those who laugh at him are not worthy to tie his shoe-strings.

He is better than ourselves, less selfish, more charitable and gracious, so naturally we find it a little hard to praise his superior qualities.

Nevertheless, after our own unworthy fashion, we are grateful for the kindnesses received at his hands. In times of misfortune, such as overtake us all, the hunting field would seem but a very sorry place without the Good Samaritan.

When the hard riders pass us by with a careless "Not hurt, are you?" he flies to the rescue. When our boon companions look another way, for fear we may expect them to stop, he comes galloping up, his kind face working with solicitude.

Oh, Good Samaritan! Oh, dear big-hearted fellow, let us give you your due, and reverence you as a being made of infinitely finer materials than the great commonplace majority of the human race.

3.—THE HOSPITABLE MAN.

THE hospitable man is always a popular one, since nothing appeals so surely to people's favour as plying them with plenty to eat and to drink. This he understands thoroughly, and is profuse in his invitations, showering them with great impartiality on the numerous acquaintances, masculine and feminine, he makes in the hunting field.

He himself is a regular *bon viveur*, with a keen appreciation of all good things appertaining to the culinary art. True, the increasing rotundity of his waistcoat, whose line of beauty grows yearly more and more curved, now and again affords subject for serious reflection; but he has a happy knack of evading disagreeable thought, and putting it off to another day. He thoroughly enjoys the various delicacies which he forces upon his guests, and sets a highly contagious example by the hearty manner in which he attacks the dishes, as much as to say, "These things are not meant to look at, but to eat. Therefore, fire away, and don't stand on ceremony."

His great delight is when the hounds meet at his house. This is always the signal for a feast; and directly the fixture is publicly announced, he goes among his friends, as happy as an old hen cackling over her eggs, and says to each one in a mysterious and confidential whisper, full of pride and self-importance, "Look here, my dear fellow, what do you think? The hounds are at my place next Saturday. Now mind and come early. You will see how much respected I am by the aristocracy. Get up half-an-hour sooner than usual; you won't regret it. Do you know what I am going to do now the thing is settled? I am going to run up to

town on Thursday; yes, actually give up a day's hunting, on purpose to buy a piece of good Scotch beef at my friend Mr. Cocks', in Jermyn Street. The meat you get here is not eatable. It's so infernally tough."

"But what a lot of trouble," suggests his companion, who would not forego a day's hunting for all the beef in the world. "It hardly seems worth it."

"Ah! don't speak to me of the trouble, as long as the things are good. Do you think I would ask my friends inside my house and give them bad meat? No, certainly not. I should be ashamed of myself. I pay a shilling a pound to Mr. Cocks for my beef. A shilling a pound is a great deal, but then it's of very different quality from what you can buy here; it positively melts in your mouth." And the old fellow smacks his lips in anticipation. Then he sidles up to his listener, gives him a friendly nudge, and, with a knowing wink, adds, "Now mind you come early, for there'll be a bottle or two of my famous port out on Saturday. That's the sort of jumping-powder to put heart into a man. After half-a-dozen glasses, I'd ride at the biggest fence ever planted in this county."

Thus the kind, garrulous fellow runs on, and will take no denial. His feelings are terribly hurt if any one attempts to make an excuse, and nearly all his acquaintances are entrapped beforehand into promising that they will enter his hospitable doors on the morning of the meet.

When the important day arrives—for he looks upon hounds meeting at his house as one of the greatest events of the year—from an early hour he is in a state of fuss and bustle, going down into the cellar with his butler, and reverently bringing up one dirt-encrusted bottle after another, paying repeated visits to the kitchen, and personally superintending every arrangement for the forthcoming festivity. By half-past ten o'clock all is ready, and with a species of proud rapture he looks at the long dining-table, enlarged to its full size, and literally laden with delicacies.

At one end a huge round of the celebrated Scotch beef, so familiar by repute to the whole Hunt, occupies a prominent position, and looks sufficient to feed a regiment of hungry soldiers. At the other, an enormous cold roast turkey, bursting with stuffing and garnished with sausages, ornaments the board. The side dishes consist of chicken, ham, tongue, sandwiches, mutton pies, biscuits, plum cake, ginger-bread nuts, &c., &c. Bottles of wine, soda and seltzer water are freely dotted about in between. The only pity is that people have come to hunt, and not to eat. This thought flashes regretfully across the provider's brain.

Meantime folks begin to arrive, and the master of the house, his jolly, rubicund face beaming with hospitality, stands at the front door, and invites, entreats and implores every fresh-comer to enter and partake of the good cheer within. Nothing vexes

him more than if they refuse, asserting that they are not hungry.

"God bless my soul!" he bursts forth. "If you can't eat, you can drink, surely. Take my word for it, I'll not poison you. Everybody in the county can tell you what sort of stuff my old port is."

"Thank you, thank you, my good friend, but I never indulge at this hour of the morning."

The hospitable man looks after the abstainer in disgust as he rides away, and behind his grizzled moustache murmurs indignantly, "D——d fool."

He meets with several vexations. Amongst others, it grieves him deeply to see how little the Scotch beef and similar substantial dainties are appreciated.

"Dear me! dear me!" he exclaims in tones of real concern. "What's the matter with you fellows? There the things are, and why the devil can't you eat them? Do you suppose they are only to be looked at?"

It is useless for the guests to try and explain that they have but very recently swallowed an excellent breakfast, and are totally unable to get up another appetite so soon. The old fellow presses, urges and insists, and all with such genuine kindness, that finally they yield to the force of circumstances, and allow an enormous helping of underdone meat to be heaped upon their plate. To please their host they take a mouthful or two, are informed that they are eating Mr. Cocks' prime Scotch beef at a shilling a pound, and with a sigh of resignation gulp it down by the aid of a glass of sherry or cherry brandy, then beat a hasty retreat into the open air.

The entertainer, thanks to the excellence of his own port, has by this time become exceedingly cheery and loquacious. With infinite reluctance, he allows one relay of friends to depart, then goes out into the garden in search of another batch, who, whether they like it or not, are stuffed with eatables and drinkables, similarly to their predecessors. The gentlemen don't come very much to the front on these occasions. The hospitable man pityingly sums them up as "poor feeders;" but amongst the farmers he finds many a kindred spirit. Fresh from a long jog to covert, and maybe an early ride round their farm in addition, several of them play an excellent knife and fork, and attack the Scotch beef with a will. This cheers the cockles of their host's expansive heart, and he watches them eat with unfeigned pleasure. He feels at last that he is not throwing his pearls before swine, but offering them to people capable of appreciating their good points.

"Capital piece of beef that, eh, Brown?" he says, smiling benignly.

"Furst rate, sir," is the reply. "I never tasted a better. It's a pleasure to put a tooth into it."

"Aha! Brown, you're a man who knows what's what, and can do justice to a good bit of meat when it's set before him."

"I hope so, sir. I should be very ungrateful if I couldn't. But this is regular prime; tender, juicy, and fine-fibred. We don't get meat like that in these parts."

"You're right there. I bought it in London, of my friend Mr Cocks in Jermyn Street."

Whereupon, for about the twentieth time, he repeats the story of how, whenever hounds meet at his house, he makes a point of running up to town and paying Mr. Cocks' establishment a visit.

"I never mind the expense," he concludes, with honest pride. "I never let that stand in the way on occasions like the present. I like to give my friends the best of everything, and then if they aren't satisfied, why it ain't my fault, eh?"

Messrs. Brown and Co. make a hearty meal, not forgetting to do full justice to the liquor. They linger round the well-spread board until hounds are on the point of throwing off, when at length they reluctantly tear themselves away. The hospitable man then proceeds to mount, though he experiences some little difficulty in introducing the point of his toe into the stirrup. It is by no means easy to stand still on one leg, and a curious haze, no doubt owing to the transition from a warm room to the cold atmosphere, obscures his eyesight. But these are only trifles, scarce worth mentioning, except very incidentally. He is in excellent spirits, and feels full of valour. He moves among the crowd with a sense of richly-deserved self-satisfaction, conscious that they have been royally entertained, and can find nothing to complain of. His reputation for hospitality, for Scotch beef and old wine has been fully sustained. Strangers have seen how richly it is deserved, and witnessed the generous principles on which his establishment is conducted. His worst enemy could not accuse him of being niggardly or mean. This knowledge makes his heart swell with triumph.

The very foot people have been treated to bread, cheese and beer *ad libitum*. When they touch their hats respectfully, he cannot help feeling that the compliment is merited. How is it possible to prevent a man from being aware of his own amiable qualities, and considering them entitled to recognition?

Every now and again the good old fellow asks his friends to dinner. On these gala nights it behoves them to be very careful, for he plies them with so much vintage wine, such marvellous selections of brown sherry, delicate claret and enticing port, that they are only too apt to suffer from the effects next morning, and rise from their couch with a splitting headache. As for their host, he is seemingly inured, for he eats, drinks, and mixes his liquors in a fashion which puts the younger generation to shame. They can't compete with him. At such times he grows very jovial and racy in his conversation. Peals of laughter issue

from the dining-room. His after-dinner stories have the reputation of being surprisingly witty and excessively naughty, and are greeted with salvos of applause. All the young fellows eagerly accept an invitation from him to dine and sleep the night. They are sure of an amusing evening, free from all stiffness and ceremony, and the hospitable man has a peculiarly gracious manner, which makes everybody feel at home in his presence. He prefers to entertain, rather than be entertained, disliking long cold drives of many miles along country roads, and not caring to quit his own snug rooms and warm fireside.

In the hunting field he is a cheery, gregarious old soul, ever ready for a laugh, though if the truth must be told, he is fonder of one at somebody else's expense than at his own. He likes to hear the latest gossip, and takes an intense interest in the doings and sayings of his neighbours. His cook and his cellar are never-failing sources of conversation. They play an important part in his life, for as he shrewdly observes, "Horses disappoint, friends annoy, but a good meal and a good bottle of wine are things that a man can always fall back upon with satisfaction."

It is impossible to help liking him; he is such a kindly, generous, sociable creature. He does not bother his head about politics or the Eastern Question, and cares nothing for the encroachments of science on religion, the evils of over-population, or any of the moving topics of the day. They occasion no disturbance in his equable and well-balanced mind, and he studies the *menu* of a morning with far more interest than he does the newspaper.

He has, however, one very pressing trouble. From time to time certain twinges of gout remind him that all flesh is mortal. His doctor recommends a simpler diet and total abstention from alcoholic drinks. The consequence is they have had a desperate quarrel.

"Darned idiot!" he growls to some bosom friend, of whose sympathy he feels certain beforehand. "Just as if life would be worth living without a good sound bottle of wine a day. That doctor of mine is of no use; I shall leave him. He takes my guineas, does me no good, and talks nonsense into the bargain. What confidence can one place in a fellow like that? The man's a fool, and what's more, he don't understand my constitution a bit. When a person has got gout his system wants building up; it's the greatest mistake in the world to lower it. Gout comes almost entirely from poverty of blood."

Few things vex the hospitable man more than, after an absence from home, to hear on his return that the hounds have run near his place.

"What!" he exclaims, "you killed in my field—the field below my house—and nobody went in! How's that? I must make inquiries. Are people to be starved because I happen to be away? It makes me mad to think of it. I feel positively ashamed. My

servants—they have orders to ask everybody in. Why was it not done? People will say I am stingy—that I only entertain when I am there myself,” and so on, and on.

It is real hard work to pacify him and to make him believe that no one for an instant doubted his hospitality, especially after the many conspicuous proofs which he has given of it.

“Ah,” he says with a sigh, “the thing is done, and it’s no use talking, but I shall take good care it don’t happen again. Those lazy fellows of mine ought to have brought out trays with the wine directly they heard the hounds. It did not matter how far they had to go.”

Our friend is exceedingly partial to the fair sex, and they look upon him with great favour in return. His hearty, kindly manner sets them at their ease, and many a sip out of his flask do they enjoy on a cold, frosty morning. It delights him to see them smack their rosy lips and cry with a pretty air of affectation, “Oh, how strong! You bad, bad man! How can you possibly drink such intoxicating stuff?”

He gives a knowing wink in return and says gravely, “My dear, you are quite right. I can’t take much, any more than you can, but what little I have I like good.”

So he goes through life; hunting, eating and drinking, without any enemies, and with a vast number of friends; some like him for himself, others for what they can get out of him, for, alas, disinterested affection is rare here below.

And when, one fine day, he succumbs to a fit of apoplexy, brought on by too full a habit of body, he is missed by the whole Hunt, who exclaim, “Ah, poor old chap, he wasn’t half a bad sort in his way!”

Comrades of the hunting field, if you and I meet with any higher praise than this when our turn comes to jump our last fence, and feel the spring of a good horse under us for the last time, we may consider ourselves lucky. “Not a bad sort in his way” is high eulogy from the survivors, who are seldom given to enthusiasm.

(To be continued.)

THE STUDY OF HANDWRITING.

By HENRY FRITH.

“**H**ANDWRITING lets out secrets,” says the Rev. Mr. Spooner in his article on “Handwriting and Character,” in a late number of *Murray's Magazine*, but he adds, “How are we to judge?” It will be my care to initiate the reader into some of the secrets of the graphologist in this paper, which, I think, will convince the critic whom I have quoted that there is a good deal more in handwriting than appears to the average observer. Many of Mr. Spooner's criticisms are excellent, and his essay, although apparently a little contradictory, is well argued. It is in no spirit of rivalry, but with the view of supplementing his paper, that I am induced to give the graphologist's ideas upon “Handwriting and Character” in reply to the former essay.

In the first place it should be borne in mind that the actual style of writing—I mean writing what is usually termed a “good” hand—has comparatively little bearing on character. A man may be as honest as the day, and write a “bad” hand. Another may be deceitful and diplomatic, and yet write boldly, frankly, and we say what a good hand So-and-So writes. All the graphologist has to do is to study the forms of the letters, the upward, the even, or the downward direction of the lines, the firmness of the crossings of the “t's,” and he will tell you whether the writer is really good or not, or whether his bad writing is the result of bodily infirmity, age, or the naturally rapid, often almost unintelligible, scrawl of imaginative genius—the result of the brain hurrying off at score, and the tired hand's endeavours to keep pace with it.

Again, the graphologist can only undertake to deduce true character from the *natural* unaffected writing of the subject; and it is a curious trait in most characters that the signature is almost invariably natural, although the writer may have endeavoured in some measure to disguise his “fist.” But any one may disguise his handwriting; indeed, Lord Chesterfield declared that “any man who has the use of his eyes and his right arm can write any hand he pleases.” Is it not a pity some do not please to write more intelligibly! Still, such handwriting is not true, but the character of the writer would be discovered after minute investigation; unless he was a practised dissimulator his letters would betray him in a short time.

As regards the change in handwriting in age, or when weakness of constitution, even temporarily, sets in, we have also something to say. The change which often comes with age is due to change of character in the individual, or to cases in which use is second nature, and, therefore, the writing is a natural outcome of character and disposition. Failing eyesight will often change a hand as a whole, but the forms of the letters will tell us whether the disposition is altered; or very possibly the consciousness of his bodily infirmity will make a man more careful and prudent in his general "walk and conversation." He may be unconscious of the change in him while he is writing, but circumspection and the necessity for carefulness are impressed upon his hitherto off-hand and impulsive brain. His hand alters, not because his eye-sight fails (for he can, and does, wear glasses), but because his *mind* is impressed by his weakness, and his nerves are answering to the brain.

Once more as regards clerks. Mr. Spooner, whom I have already quoted, says, "We know how meaningless individual clerks' hands tend to become." The writing of some "has become by constant use an almost purely mechanical process." These statements are capable of emendation. Let me in the first place state my belief that clerks' hands are not by any means "meaningless," that is, *characterless*, which is Mr. Spooner's contention. The average clerk writes a clear, open hand, neat and orderly in appearance. Why? Because he is not greatly imaginative; he is doing routine work for which nature has moulded him, and because his character is plodding, steady, honest, and not imaginative, his writing is steady, clear; well-formed letters, lines straight, all typical traits of a reliable clerk. He is a clerk because he has these characteristics—he has not these characteristics of writing *because he is a clerk*! Precision and neatness are his natural attributes; his writing shows him to be trustworthy, open, candid, honest, painstaking, neat and tidy. He is all these, and more, or he would not have been retained in his position. How can such handwriting be characterized as "meaningless!"

Besides, all clerks do not write such careful hands, such "copperplate." Take a youthful energetic correspondent, or a stockbroker's quick, clever, smart clerk, a man of ideas and intuition. Will he write a plodding hand? Certainly not. His writing will be flowing, with high-barred *t*'s, and the letters will be uneven in height, showing tact and a flowing imagination, a quick brain. Compare the man who runs in a groove and the man who uses his brain a little outside his groove. They are both clerks, but they indicate their tendencies clearly in their writing. There are no doubt exceptions in which men have been obliged to do distasteful duties, and by will and application have conquered

NOTE.—Mark "mechanical;" no spontaneity in it—no will, no brain!

their dislike to plodding; but their writing will break out when they are not in the office and not writing by "rule and line." Even in the ledgers you will see the tendency to hurry on.

Therefore, I maintain that hands are not "meaningless." They all have a meaning and character in them, and characteristics suited to the owners. The business hand may not display any marked eccentricity, or any great talent for painting or other form of art, but it will indicate punctuality, order, *finesse*, firmness, some selfishness most likely, with economy. I have such a handwriting by me now as I write, and though the individual is not a regular business man in trade, he is an excellent man of business if report be true. I have had no means of judging of him in such a capacity save from his handwriting.

As regards the handwriting of boys at school, we read: "In no particular is man more imitative than in this matter of handwriting. A vast majority of people in 'forming' their hands, more or less deliberately copy the writing of some one else—parent or teacher, friend or acquaintance." Then the critic says that a certain type of writing "has run over a considerable number of years through the great proportion of the upper boys in one of our public schools, a stamp of handwriting clearly due to the influence of one particular master."

Now, here, to my mind, Mr. Spooner is arguing against himself. He does not say that *all* the boys write alike, but only a certain proportion of them, and the writing is due to the "*influence of the master*." Precisely! The master's brain has overpowered the youthful brains of his pupils; his ideas are their ideas for the time being, and as he exerts his "influence" he causes them to imitate him. All, save some independent and original *senior brains*, do as his stronger brain bids them! They write as he does, *at school*. But after? When released from his influence, and when they have become lawyers, doctors, soldiers and sailors, do they write his hand? No, *certainly not*; unless their tastes are still in harmony with his in after life. Do two people *ever* write exactly alike? No! The schoolboys *may* write *like* their master because they have little will beyond him, and he has formed their characters for the time, but give them another master and try! Even on the face of the statement some boys write differently. The master has not the same influence with them. They have more "character" than the others.

Thus, I think the argument as to "meaningless" and characterless writing falls to the ground. The cases adduced by Mr. Spooner will not stand the test from the graphologist's point of view. By "accident," or by continual association, people may write alike; but the accident is the accident of similarity of disposition and character, and association will mould one disposition to another. If girls write like their mothers it is not because they

"copy" their mother's writing; it is because their mother's characteristics are reproduced in them.

There is a considerable approximation, as Mr. Spooner says, to the men's handwriting by women of the present day, and he goes on to say that women have "copied" the handwriting of the men. In most cases—save where a lady may be writing business circulars, and adopts, temporarily, a more manly hand—I venture to say that this change is in the *occupations* of women—the change in their lives, thoughts—and is the outcome of higher education, greater cultivation, and in the fact of the women treading on men's heels in every path of life, even outstripping them in many ways. Graphologists maintain that it is much less "external influence" than internal (brain) influence that alters the writing. An artistic, somewhat sensuous, determined woman will give us rounded, graceful capital letters, and thick writing; sometimes eccentric forms of letters, which denote originality of mind, thickly crossed "t's," which denote will, obstinacy, and so on. This is the very last woman likely to "copy" anything! Her masculine, original hand gives us an independent and determined character, which makes her write as she does. Mr. Spooner hits the right note when he says that "the untidy writing of mathematicians arises from their thoughts so constantly outstripping their power of expression in words." But if so, surely the copying, or "imitative," argument is cancelled! If the brain be admitted to have play in a man, why not in a woman and a schoolboy? Is not this admission inconsistent with previous criticism of the contributor aforementioned?

Literary men, too, of impulsive imagination and of much energy, often write most indifferent hands—illegible, I mean. Take the late Walter Thornbury, the "Ettrick Shepherd," Macaulay, Byron, Fenimore Cooper, and the living (and long may he live) James Payn. These men are types of most imaginative and *rapid* writing. Some persons will doubtless cite "George Eliot" as an instance to the upsetting of my argument, but I *fancy*, for I do not *know*, that "George Eliot" did not write in a hurry; she had a splendid imagination, but she (I should judge) did not "dash off" her MS. Her clear writing is expressive of intellect and a carefully produced narrative—not a story thrown off from the quick-working, restless brain of a sensitive, energetic, perhaps irritable writer.

If any one can compare the handwritings of illustrious personages, he or she will at once perceive how the characteristics of the individual are reproduced. Look at Mr. Gladstone's firm, tenacious, "tactful," rather sensuous, but energetic, quick-tempered writing. His obstinate bars to the *t's* show despotism; the angularity of the letters, quick temper; the undulating writing, *finesse*; the thickness of it, firmness, obstinacy, love of enjoyment of a more or less physical character, and so on. Oliver Cromwell wrote a bold, steady hand; so did the Eighth Harry, and Charles the First a

fine open, candid, *weak* hand, irresolute to a degree; while his son Charles wrote a very "dissimulating" hand.

Lord Tennyson, again, is clear and classic; Washington wrote a manly hand; Moore, the poet, an easy-going, careless, running hand, as of a man easily influenced by his surroundings; Wendell Holmes, a graceful, finished hand; Mary, Queen of Scots, an elegant, sensuous hand, gentle, and yet with traces of firmness, though simple; Elizabeth's hand is severe and bold. So instances might be adduced almost *ad infinitum* to prove that the writing is due to the brain and not to "external" influences, as has been said.

I cannot say that I agree in the dictum that a man's signature is the most conscious and the "less spontaneous" part of his writing. On the contrary, I fancy it will be found that a man seldom writes his signature exactly the same six times running. Ask any bank cashier and he will tell you his experience. I believe the signature is the true expression in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, and for this reason. A man may take great pains to conceal his thoughts in a letter, but having finished and read it, being satisfied, he would not wish to dissemble his signature, and it would be with a natural feeling of relief that he would sign his name—for why dissemble it? His name, written by himself, is always valid; he has no need to alter it, save for bodily infirmity, or for some reason which will not bear investigation—a very unlikely case. It is conceivable that a man may alter his writing as a whole, but why alter his signature only? My own impression is that a person's signature is usually spontaneous, and an excellent index to his character. It varies often in details—a fact which tends to prove its spontaneity. It responds to the change of feelings.

Graphologists do not claim to "tell a person's history" from their handwriting. So far as I am aware the mental and bodily characteristics are indicated, and then a critic will evolve a very excellent delineation of character from the writing. Of course practice is required. Whist and billiards require practice; chemistry and other sciences also. So with palmistry and graphology. When one understands the basis of these sciences the details are only matters of application. Mr. Spooner remarks, "There are people to be found who believe in palmistry!" If he would study palmistry he would believe in it too. It is merely because people confuse "chiromancy" with gipsy fortune-telling that they pooh-pooh palmistry and kindred sciences. Those who do not understand are always the most contemptuous critics. But to be a true critic one ought to understand the thing criticised.

I could give instances in which I have told character by handwriting with correctness which appeared astonishing to any one who had not studied the principles. And in nations as in individuals. There is a grace in the Italian, and sentimentality; a pride in the Spanish types; an argumentative and self-contained

look about German calligraphy, with all its long letters, of music and imagination. The vivacity of the Frenchman and the sturdiness of the average Briton are also observable when their writings are compared.

There is no sex in writing, as we have seen. Sir Arthur Helps said that prime ministers have generally been good writers, and surely if haste and business influenced us more than brain these gentlemen would have been excused if they had written badly. But they wrote well! The Iron Duke, Lords John Russell and Palmerston, Sir R. Peel and others wrote well. Surely brain and thought had something to do with such clear correspondence, not "outside influence."

Georges Sand adopted a manly writing for press purposes, yet her own unstudied writing had something manly in it. We may likewise adopt a handwriting, but I maintain that given a true, natural specimen of writing, it is perfectly possible to deduce the general character and disposition. And as regards failures and successes which Mr. Spooner compares. What are the failures? Who can tell what his friend is? Was it not Wendell Holmes who said a man had three individualities—the man as known to himself; the man known to his fellow-man; and the man known to his Maker? This is true as anything can be; and so when you tell Smith that his dearest friend is a liar, selfish and tyrannical, he denies it because *he* thinks Jones charming and frank, his very frankness being a cloak for untruth and meanness. The failures are often only failures *d'estime*; they are true, in fact, though the man himself only knows *how* true. People are very often hypocrites, self-deceivers, and think they can remain undetected. Unless they write a feigned or forced hand—an unnatural hand—they will be patent humbugs to the graphologist.

Was an open "gushing" nature ever known to close the loops of *o's* and *a's*? Was a self-contained person ever known to keep the loops open? Why do energetic, successful men write with an upward tendency, and the weak, the desponding, the sickly—those who have the germs even of death present in them—write a descending hand? Why does the critic divide his letters, and the man of connected ideas keep them together? Why do the romantic and sentimental write sloping hands, with long-tailed and headed letters, and the selfish and stingy write uprightly and "dock" their loops?

I could give instances and examples of all these, but have already said enough. Handwriting is an excellent guide to character if the rules of common-sense and observation be regarded. Experience is doubtless necessary as in all else, but when experience is gained it will be seen that there is more in graphology than most people think, or are willing to admit.

NOTE.—I possess an autograph of Rudolf of Austria, written a few hours before his death, in which the fall of the "hand of Fate" is very evident. He was doomed then!

EE

A TWILIGHT STORY.

By C. H. D. STOCKER GIGLIOLI.

AUTHOR OF "BETWEEN THE ACTS."

"Love is and was my King and Lord,
And will be, tho' as yet I keep
Within his court on earth, and sleep
Encompassed by his faithful guard,

And hear at times a sentinel
Who moves about from place to place,
And whispers to the worlds of space,
In the deep night, that all is well."—*In Memoriam.*

WHEN the past holds the completed action of our life, and the present seems scarcely more than a patient waiting, the future no longer a boundless vista of happy possibility, but a narrow and ever narrowing shadow-ground betwixt us and a life more real than that which is ebbing from us; then, speaking in the perfect tense, we can tell the story of ourselves of long ago, and scarcely realize that we and they were once so closely inter-twined.

Aye it is long, long ago, and I that sit here alone, hearing the clock tick and the noisy spring wind blow about the house in the twilight, staring into the quiet fire till my eyes ache and grow dim—I am not young, nor merry, nor lovely. If they who knew and loved me years ago could come now and look into the room and see me sitting here, they would surely turn away and say, "That is not Jeanie Dalrymple; she had sunny brown hair and brown laughing eyes, and merry dimples always ready to play hide and seek with quick smiles among the red roses in her cheeks. We never knew this sad-eyed, faded woman."

Ah, no! and alas! they can never come and look in upon my loneliness. Were it not for an old heartache that I have, I could think that the Jeanie Dalrymple whom they knew is dead; even that I remember the day she died; even that I could show you her grave if your eyes could see what mine see when the spring sunset fades and the light dies away, and that rushing wind plays among the leafless trees. There are other graves near it, and sunshine and flowers on its distant further side; but this side is all in shadow—evening shadows are very long—and here are no flowers, nor anything to mark the way any more.

I was English governess in a large school in North Germany. Not that I had any special aptitude or love for teaching, but orphaned, poor, and almost without friends, there was nothing else open to me, and I boldly took the first situation that offered.

My ignorance of other languages was perhaps my greatest recommendation to my employers, besides which I was naturally what is called obliging, and anxious for the approval of my betters and the affection of my pupils. I suppose I attained my modest ambition, for I was very happy in my new country, and never fretted for any other home. But there is still a deep, wonderful mystery to me in the destiny that led me, a lassie reared among the moors and hills of Scotland, across the sea, to cast in my lot among a strange people; that wove my strand of life into that alien warp and woof, while yet neither I nor those other two whose fates were leagued with mine, divined the subtle intertwining of the bonds which even Death, though he might sever them, could nevermore unravel nor resolve.

Looking back into those happy days, I cannot tell how it began, nor when it was that I first knew I had something to hide, and feared to raise my eyes to his as hitherto, and felt my heart leap and tremble at the sound of his voice in the corridors or his foot-step outside the door. He came and went as he liked in the great resounding, carpetless house, and was more like a younger brother of the two elderly Fräuleins who directed the school, than only Herr Meyer, who lectured on History, Literature, and Art. I know not how it was that he held this curious position among us; the other professors and teachers went straight to their class-rooms when they came, and straight out of the house when their work was done, unless specially sent for. But it never seemed to occur to Herr Meyer that the house was not his as long as he chose to walk about it. He used to pace the wide corridor that overlooked the court-yard, his shoulders a little rounded, his hands clasped behind him, his head bent, and would nod and smile absently at any of us who went by. Sometimes the fancy took him to go into the Green Room—Fräulein Krüger's sitting-room—where we only penetrated for occasional reprimands or courts-martial on week days, or for coffee and extra cakes on Sunday afternoons; in he would stroll, with scarcely a tap at the door, and continue his measured pacing there. Or he would suddenly open the door of the class-room where I sat superintending the girls' preparation, and stand smiling in the doorway and saying:

"Ja, ja, Kinder! So geht es in der Welt!" A remark he made at least a dozen times a day. Or he would come and seat himself on the table and talk to us as if to him all learning were a thing of naught. Compared to *his* learning, I daresay all that feeble pottering of girls over books that most of them only longed to have done with, was indeed of no account. So there he sat and kept us in fits of laughter at his jokes and stories, or his extrava-

vagant buffoonery. Sometimes he acted or performed conjuring tricks, or declaimed poetry with animated gestures ; sometimes it was a lesson in English that he must have, but his real knowledge of it surpassed mine, though his accent was incorrigibly bad ; or he would volunteer to teach me German ; or set the children to tell him fairy-tales, and all at once, in the middle of it, he would just walk off and leave us disorganized and dull and disinclined for work. I believe his mind was often occupied with quite other things all the time ; and it was his utter absence of self-consciousness, such as one meets with only in noble natures or among clever men, that enabled him to be so extraordinary, so natural, so irresistibly ridiculous, and withal so lovable. As for his marvellous knowledge, spreading broad and deep over his own great special studies, and running besides into a hundred by-channels of curious lore, language, natural history, archæology, and many other subjects that only did not rise to the surface because there was nothing in his surroundings to draw it up—no one knew how he acquired it all, unless he had the enviable faculty of working all night as well as all day. When I first saw him he was about eight-and-thirty ; a big, tall man, who would have looked taller but for that slovenly, student gait and carriage that he had ; he was well off, for a German, but his dress was always desperately shabby and untidy ; I don't think he knew what he wore, and his thick, dark hair, sprinkled with grey, hung long about his collar in a way I never could endure before or since, or in any one but him ; just as his eccentric ways would have been insufferable in Herr Dr. Plettner, Herr Jäger or any of the others. His forehead was immense, his features fine, his mouth was hidden by a bushy, dark moustache, but his broad chin and cheeks were shaven and had that blue look that ought really to be ugly, but to a woman, or at least to me, is nothing of the kind. His prominent, long brows made such a shadow that one could not be sure what colour his eyes were ; but I know they were blue, as blue as the sky and sea used to be in those days. With the same easy naturalness and oddness that characterized everything he said and did, he called all the girls by their Christian names, or composed funny diminutive pet-names or nick-names for them, and he never called me anything but "Meess Sheanie," except when he calmly dropped the "Miss." And I, uneasily reflecting at my solitary leisure or in wakeful watches of the night that I was sadly wanting in dignity and maidenly reserve, never brought myself to utter one protesting word to belie the pleasure it gave me to hear him call me so.

Well, the months fled by and my smooth life-stream was troubled with a wandering under-current of unrest, which deepened and flowed faster as time went on. For brief hours of unquestioning, reckless happiness I paid long days and longer nights of miserable doubt and anxiety and passionate tears. And still, somehow—perhaps because I was such a mere girl—my spirits were merry

enough as long as I was not alone; nothing spoiled the colour in my cheeks or the brightness of my eyes, and with help of all the little pride I had I kept my heart hidden from all the world.

Happy or miserable, I never asked myself how it was to end; those were days of beginning only, when if I expected anything at all, it was only vaguely that each to-morrow would be happier than to-day. If he came and sat by me and read or talked with me, or made me sing to him or give him a lesson, I was more than content; if he ignored me I cried when I lay in bed at night, with my head under the pillow for fear the girls should hear. I had been a year in the school when one day he found me marking a set of new handkerchiefs with my monogram in satin stitch, and he must needs examine and admire, and the children looked up and cried out that there was nothing I could not do with my needle and my fingers. And he stared at me a long while as I sat there bending my face over my work, and then he sighed and muttered his favourite remark softly to himself, "Ja, ja, Kinder! So geht es in der Welt! Ja, ja, Sheanie, you will make the very best wife of all the women I know."

He said it quite absently, and I knew the children were smiling at each other across their copy-books.

"I'll bring you my handkerchiefs to mark like that for me," he added tranquilly.

If he had ordered me to weave them I would have done it gladly, and in a few days he came into the class-room and put them down before me. I was alone, as it happened, and he sat down on the table as he so often did and watched me. I know now what was passing in his dreamy, unpractical, simple mind—simple, because it had no alloy of self, self-love, self-interest; anything but simple in its strange tangle of noble ideas and helpless unworldliness. But at the time I could not know; and whether my temper was ruffled that afternoon, or whether it was that I was nervous and shy at being alone with him there and at his long, strange silence, I cannot tell, but I grew vexed with him and with myself. I felt bitterly ashamed, for the first time, of having given unasked and beyond recalling all that I had to give to this man, who evidently classed me with the other children and played with me as he played with them. I felt it was my own fault for allowing him the liberty he had taken, and then my cheeks suddenly grew burning hot under his eyes, and when he spoke I was in a mood to avenge my pride at any cost.

"It is very good of you to do all these for me," he said at last, with a huskiness that the commonplace words could never have warranted.

"They're not done yet," I said shortly.

I knew then that he was nervous, my heart divined the cause and beat very fast, but I would not part with my ill-temper all at

once now that I had let him see it. Oh! it was such a little thing that unkind mood of mine that day; but it had a double, deadly edge; it was not fit for a plaything, nor was that an hour for me to have been playing. My tone hurt him and I was pleased and miserable at once.

"Oh, Jeanie!" he said in gentle, grieved surprise.

"Herr Meyer, I wish you would not call me by my Christian name; I don't like it."

"Is that true?" he said very earnestly. "Do you mean that?"

I answered instantly, but there had been a desperate struggle in my heart. The tears were creeping up in my throat, but my pride was forcing them down; I wanted to look up and smile away the evil spirit that was parting us, to say I was sorry, and never mind if the foolish tears choked my voice; but I wanted, too, to show him that I was not a child to be trifled with; that I could be dignified when I chose, and that he was not always to have everything exactly his own way.

And I let the evil spirit have its way, and because the lump in my throat was choking me I spoke rather loud and sharp lest he should divine how near I was to tears, and I said:

"Certainly I mean it. I have always thought it a great liberty on your part."

I suppose I meant him to persuade me out of my bad temper, but he never suspected me of deliberate untruth; he believed me, and after a moment's dead silence he rose to go away.

"I am a rude, ill-mannered fellow, Miss Dalrymple," he said with honest regret, "I will not do it any more."

I had not a word to say. He lingered, and his eyes, I suppose, fell on the handkerchiefs he had brought for me to work.

"Miss Dalrymple, I daresay—perhaps—perhaps you never meant me to—to take the liberty of really asking you to do all that beautiful work for me? I ought never to have asked it—let me take them away."

My anger was all gone, but not my pride, and I laughed. "Oh! no," I said, almost in my natural tone, "please don't do that. I shall have plenty of time to do them in Trudchen von Pawels' detention hours."

"Ach! das arme Trudchen! poor little Trudchen!" he said with a touch of the wonderful tenderness he had for all young creatures, although they must have tried him very sorely as pupils, "das arme Trudchen!" and he went away, supposing himself altogether in the wrong and bearing me not the slightest spark of ill-will.

Trudchen was my very naughtiest and most troublesome pupil. There was never a day when I did not have to find fault with her; seldom a half-holiday afternoon when she was not detained in school with a punishment lesson or arrears of scamped work, on

which occasions I of course was detained too, to see that it was done.

The professors and Mademoiselle had long since given her up, expecting nothing from her and tacitly ignoring her idleness because they held her incorrigible. I, however, was new to my work and saw promise in the idle ones and redeeming points in the black sheep, and I believed that Trudchen might yet be made to work and behave like a young lady instead of like the strange wild thing she was. She was often so near the very verge of being tractable that the scale was only turned as it were by a hair's weight; it seemed really only by an unfortunate succession of chances that it was always turned the wrong way.

How it was I don't know, but I was fonder of Trudchen than of all the rest, however admirable their conduct might be, and in her fashion she was fond of me. She used to bring me great bunches of forget-me-nots, lilies of the valley, wallflowers, a handful of lilac or roses—whatever was in season—and lay them on my desk with probably a vague idea of propitiating me, or atoning in some degree for the execrable exercise or hap-hazard repetition that she was going presently to inflict upon me.

All these had to be sternly ignored until the lesson was over, and I put them aside that the sight of them and Trudchen's appealing eyes might not combine to overpower my artificial severity.

"Will Trudchen get through without disgrace to-day?" I used to ask myself as I went to my class-room with a foreboding mind, and my lesson was generally closed by her flinging her arms round me, in spite of my dignified, reproachful air, and saying as she held me fast and insisted on looking into my averted eyes, "Ach, Dalrymplechen!" (She never would call me Miss Dalrymple.) "Liebes Dalrymplechen! Sind Sie mir böse?"

"Speak English, Trudchen."

"Are you me busy!" Oh! her English was enough to break one's heart!

"Busy, Trudchen! How can you? What is böse?"

"I know it not, Dalrympling—wollen mal deutsch sprechen. Laugh you now."

"No, Gertrude; you are too naughty. Would any one believe that you have been learning English for nine years?"

"What say you, Dalrymplechen?—Ach! Sehen Sie doch nicht so böse aus! Kiss me once, liebes Dalrymplechen—ach! kiss once!—laugh you!—laugh you!—Ah! she laugh now."

"Yes, you make me laugh. You must say laugh, not 'laugh you,' and böse is cross. Do speak English."

"Ja, Dalrympling—das will ich—morgen—to-morrow—ganz gewiss—I—verspreche es—wie heisst *versprechen*, Dalrymplechen?"

"I promise," said I with a weary sinking of heart. It was just like sowing seed in a whirlwind.

"Und Sie sind mir nicht böse, Dalrymplechen?"

"Oh, Trudchen!" this in despair.

"And you me not—ach! das alte dumme Englisch!—cross!—you me not cross?"

"Yes, I am vexed with you," I said sorrowfully.

"Armes Dalrympling! Poor old Dalrympling! Sie ist ja wirklich böse—she really cross. Adieu, poor Dalrympling! Ich finde Sie grausam——"

"Cruel," I corrected.

"Ja, Sie sind ein Gräuel," in tones of virtuous reproach.

"A horror," I put in inflexibly.

Trudchen merely shook her head, "Wie können Sie nur so grässlich sein?" she went on in the same tone.

"Say, 'How can you be so horrid?' No, Trudchen, it is no use. Let me go."

"Kiss once, then—I speak English, Dalrymplechen—kiss once, and I go already."

It always ended in her extorting a kiss and making me feel myself a heartless tyrant.

I cannot explain the fascination she had for me. She certainly was not pretty; just a tall, slim slip of a thing of fifteen or so, with thin, irregular features and a nose "tip-tilted like the petal of a flower," a mass of wavy dark hair arranged in two long, rough plaits, tied very generally with odd ribbons—one pink and one blue—great dark passionate eyes, and a flush, a smudge, a violent dab of red on each brown cheek, as untidily "scumbled" on as everything else about her. However, there *are* people whom one loves for no reason at all; they steal one's heart and give one nothing—absolutely nothing in return.

We had gone through our usual little scene one morning about a week after my foolish quarrel with Herr Meyer. "Must I come this afternoon, Dalrymplechen?" Trudchen demanded (in German, of course) in her most seductive tones. "Say no, my old one!" and she put a persuasive hand on each of my shoulders and smiled into my face.

"Certainly you must," I replied, trying to turn away, and positively astonished at her unblushing effrontery—common as it was—for she had not attempted a single word of her exercise, and as for her English poetry, without once reading it through she had boldly risen in her place and endeavoured to repeat it by inspiration, had of course failed glaringly, and set the whole class laughing at her, which was just what she enjoyed. And then to suppose that she would not be kept in! "I'm amazed at you," I said. "Come at half-past two."

With a volley of German expletives she flung me from her in a pet, hurled all her books with a bang and a crash on to one of the desks, darted a resentful glance at me through swimming tears, and ran out of the room. I followed her to the door and saw her snatch her hat from the stand in the corridor as she passed.

"Don't keep me waiting, Trudchen," I called out after her, as she ran down the stairs, but she did not even turn her head, and the next minute the street door slammed violently.

I stood in the corridor and watched the children from the sixth class coming down from their class-room on the next floor. These tiny creatures were a refreshment to me, they did not learn English. I should rather say, they did not have to be taught it, for I don't know that my big girls learned it.

Fat and solemn, with their slates and satchels and knitting, their diminutive pigtails and tidy pinafores, they came carefully down, one step at a time, staring at me between the bannisters. My pet of them all was Trudchen's younger sister, an untidy scrap of a thing with a blaze of rough red hair and large brown eyes like Trudchen's; I would have given a half-holiday for a genuine hug from those tiny arms, and a spontaneous kiss from that wicked little mouth. I was unusually out of spirits that day; I had not even seen Herr Meyer all the week, and each day that defeated my intention of making friends and confessing myself utterly in the wrong made me more and more unhappy.

"Wanda," I said coaxingly, intercepting her at the foot of the stairs, "Wanda, will you show me your knitting?"

She looked at me gravely and shook her head.

"I *should* so like to see that stocking you are making," I said. "You might show it me. I am so unhappy, Wanda."

Her resolution wavered, she scrutinized my face more closely and then glanced at her little bit of grimy knitting—painful achievement of many patient hours—and back again at my face.

Another moment and the victory would have been mine; but, alas! the drawing-room door opened and Herr Meyer came out; he passed me with a grave inclination of his head, Wanda rushed up to him with outstretched arms and screams of baby laughter, and he picked her up and set her on his shoulder and they went off together in high glee, leaving me alone.

I was very wretched; I could have cried my eyes out, but my room was not only mine, and I could not go to dinner with red eyes and only half-conquered sobs and meet four-and-twenty pair of curious eyes. At half-past two I was in my class-room, although I knew Trudchen would not appear for at least ten minutes.

I stood humming at one of the windows watching the boarders walking in pairs up and down the courtyard below with their arms round each other's necks, chatting and laughing, for it was a half-holiday. Up above, amongst the red roofs, the jackdaws were fluttering about in the wind, and white clouds were sailing across the blue between the roof-ridges and my window frame. Through an opening between the houses I could catch a glimpse of glittering sea with white breakers and little brown sails that made one long to be out in the sun and wind. I was thinking that perhaps I ought to try some other plan with Trudchen. I knew she was

an orphan, a remote connection of Herr Meyer's, and that the home she had in the house of an uncle and aunt was anything but happy; that she and her little sister were absolutely dependent on this uncongenial charity, poor things. Perhaps it was useless for me to insist on the full measure of work, knowing how her home life handicapped her and dragged her down. I would talk to her very seriously, I thought, and reduce her work on condition——

Suddenly the door burst open, and Trudchen, radiant, panting, with glowing cheeks, rushed in and flung her arms round me with such energy that I had to cry out for mercy with what little breath I had left.

"Ach! Dalrymplechen, Dalrymplechen, Dalrymplechen!" she cried, hugging me violently and kissing me in the most reckless way, "I'm not coming back to school any more! No more old stupid English! No more nasty detention!" and she clapped her hands and danced round me, who stood there bewildered.

"Guess, guess, Dalrympling!" she said, standing still a minute, and then she began dancing round me again. "You never, never will."

"Come, that will do, Trudchen," I said, recovering my speech. "What do you mean?"

"I'm engaged to be married," she answered with a little war-hoop, hopping on one foot.

"*You*, Trudchen?" I cried aghast. "*You*? You're not sixteen. Impossible!"

"No! True, true, true!" cried Trudchen, shaking me vigorously. "You will see us driving round the town to-morrow, calling on all the acquaintance."

"But tell me," I panted, escaping from her, "tell me about him. You have kept it marvellously quiet, you harum-scarum creature!"

"Quiet!" she repeated; "why, I never gave him a thought till to-day. The uncle called me into the sitting-room and he rose from the sofa beside Tante Auguste and asked me if I would marry him. Ha, ha! Dalrymplechen! So I asked whether I would have to go to school any more, and whether I might be let off detention this afternoon if I said yes, and he was sure I might, and said I need never go to school any more. So I said yes!" Pronouncing the last word with a little shout, she began to dance again in ecstasy, till I felt quite giddy. "Don't be alarmed for my happiness, my old English one," said she embracing me fervently again, "for he is very well off; uncle said it. Now guess who it is."

"An officer, of course," I hazarded, for the town simply swarmed with handsome lieutenants.

"Ah, no; I wish he was," she said with momentary gloom.

I guessed a young doctor whose sadly unmarried state excited the compassion and interest of all the elder girls; and then some

of our partners at the last ball the Realschüler had given us at the Hotel Bismarck, but Trudchen only shook her dark, rough head and danced more ecstatically, and at last, delighted so thoroughly to have mystified me, she threw her arms round my neck with a tremendous hug and called out triumphantly, "Herr Meyer, Herr Meyer, Herr Meyer!"

The words rang in my head as if they would never cease vibrating there; I saw the door move and open gently, and Herr Meyer's face appear smiling there—he had been waiting outside all the time peeping in; something rose strangling in my throat, I tried to laugh, and when Trudchen relaxed her arms to rush and fling them round her betrothed, darkness closed about me, and I thought I should have fallen to the floor; but I *would* not give way; I caught the window-sill and got the window open, and the cold air revived me. I felt faint and sick, and must have looked white enough to frighten less pre-occupied people, but I thought Herr Meyer had not seen, and I made shift to smile and wish them happiness. And if the embrace I gave Trudchen at parting was stiff and cool, it was only that the least tenderness must have overmastered my faltering self-control.

When the two were gone I sat there like a stone, working at his last handkerchief till it grew too dark to see, and then I sat on the window-sill in a dull stupor, staring up at the gold-green sky and the faint stars with dry aching eyes that could not weep. Oh! Trudchen, Trudchen! I never envied you the happiness you seemed to take so lightly; the love I thought you could not understand—madcap child that you were!

But I could not stay on in the old place. I kept up heart, I know not how—only I think strength comes when our need is very sore—and I marked all Trudchen's handkerchiefs for her trousseau, and went with the rest to the wedding; and then, on the plea that the school work was too much for me, I gave up my place and took another in a private family on a country farm thirty miles inland. There I used to long and pine for the sea—just for a sight of the blue, sparkling Baltic, with its broken wavelets all dancing in the spring sunshine, as I remembered it on that terrible day; just for one breath of that keen salt air. But I stayed where I was, thinking I should never be happy again, though I did my best to work and play as the turn of each came round, and the very effort did me good. My former pupil wrote to me now and then at first, and then I completely lost sight of all my old friends, and clinging to my resolve never to go back, I spent my holidays where I was, and set myself to study German in earnest, living only in the moment—a strange cramped life—not able to look forward, not daring to look back; scarcely wishing myself dead, yet caring not at all to live.

At last, after two years, the parents of my pupils asked me if I would be willing to take them to town (as we called it) and stay there

with them a week or ten days, while they were under the hands of the dentist. I never thought of saying no, and we went. We had rooms at the Hotel Zum Kronprinzen, and I took the children to the dentist, and to visit their friends in the town, and shopped with them, walking along the familiar ways like one in a dream of other days. When they were in bed I used to throw a shawl round me and hurry out, thankful to be alone, and would go down to the harbour and walk up and down the quays in the spring twilight listening to the waves and the wind, and longing vainly for peace after my sore disquiet and unrest. I was walking so one evening up and down the windy quay, looking at nothing and thinking of nothing, but with that live-long torment keeping out the light and peace from my soul, when all at once he was there—Herr Meyer—holding out both hands for mine with a strange look in his eyes, half sorrowful reproach, half glad surprise.

"Ach, Jeanie!" he said, with a long sigh as of relief, turning to pace beside me, "I thought I—we—were never to see you again."

We walked up and down, up and down, till it grew dark; he asking me a thousand questions, and I answering with short, stupid sentences and long silences between. I could not talk to him somehow, and he felt it at last and grew silent too, and then I said I must go. I struggled with myself as we went up into the town, and when he was leaving me at the door of the hotel, I found courage to say falteringly:

"To-morrow is my last day—I—I—I will try, Herr Meyer—Trudchen——" but my foolish voice was beyond control, and failed for an instant, I was so nervous and unstrung, but I tried again. "To-morrow I should like to go and see——"

"Yes, yes," he interrupted, quickly understanding my stammering words, and then he added low, "Let me come for you; when do you think you will be ready?"

I had to take the children to a coffee-party in the afternoon, and then I knew I would be free to do as I pleased, so I fixed five o'clock, and he came for me the next evening just as the chimes were ringing.

All the morning a soft still rain had been falling, but the sun was shining then, and the blackbirds sang in the Bürgergarten and in the budding horse-chestnuts on the boulevard as we went along. I had never been in his house since his marriage, and did not even know where it was, so I left the way to him, and knowing his odd moods of old, I did not wonder at his silence. Besides, my heart was full, for all the trouble had passed away, and I felt I could be brave to face the rest of my life, and not be unhappy and hard and thankless any more. I sometimes think that was the happiest hour of my whole life; even now the memory of it is blessed to me; but at the time it left no room for other thought or sight or sound, and when at last his voice broke the

silence which had wrapped us both, it was as if I had been wakened from a deep dream.

I looked up at him a little bewildered, and saw his eyes full of tears; mine fell again and rested on a grave at our feet. We were in the cemetery, with cypresses and leafless willows and graves all round us, and Trudchen and her baby lay buried there under the grass and the ivy, and this was the second spring that had seen the snowdrops nodding on her grave. The floodgates of my tears, fast locked these two years long, were broken down and swept away on the storm tide of overwhelming pity and sorrow, and with a cry I fell down, my arms across the grave and my face upon them in an agony of weeping.

It was not till then that he saw I had never heard of it, and realized what a shock it was to me, who had just been expecting to see her full of life as of old.

He let me cry—I don't know how long—but at last he raised me and made me come away. We walked once or twice up and down the cypress alleys while I tried to stifle my sobs, and he told me quietly and sadly the little there was to tell, and then he took me back into the town.

So I went away home to the country with the children, sad at times, and yet happier than I had been all the last two years, because I knew I had conquered myself. The lessons no longer seemed dreary, nor the play a burden. I think the children felt a difference, for they made more demand upon my leisure, and called me away from my books to many a romp in the farm-yard, and hide-and-seek among the straw heaps and in and out of barn and byre. "We never knew you could run so fast, Miss Dalrymple," they gasped breathlessly one evening, when I had caught them one after another, and we had all flung ourselves down panting in the straw, "but we shall take care you do not catch us again." "We shall see," I returned laughing, as I twisted up my dishevelled hair, and they ran off and hid, and the chase began again. We all ran our very hardest, laughing and screaming, and I was aware, as I flew along, that Frau Schütt had come out to watch us from the seat under the lindens before the door. Little Marie bolted round the corner of the barn, and I ran through to catch her as she passed the further door, and rushed straight into the arms of some one who seemed to rise from the ground solely for the purpose of discomfiting me. I retired a step, pouring out German apologies, but I was answered in English, in the bad accent I knew so well, and there was Herr Meyer laughing at me.

"Oh!" I panted, conscious now of my untidy hair and the little bits of straw that littered me from head to foot. "Oh, Herr Meyer!"

But I supposed he divined that I was glad at the sight of him, for he took my hands without any preamble, quite heedless

of the nearing shouts of the children, and said, "Jeanie, I can't do without you. I have come to ask you if you can love me and be my wife. Oh! answer nothing but the very truth."

He might well say so to me, knowing as he had known now these two years that I had said words to him that were not true, and gone near to make shipwreck of his life and mine. And I knew it too, now, though in his loyalty to the dead he never breathed one word of explanation to me. He would have asked me that day to be his wife; he married Trudchen because he believed I had never cared and could never care for him, and because his good heart ached for the poor motherless, wayward, lovable child in her wretched home.

I could not speak, but I looked up in his face and saw it shining in the sunset, yet with a light that never any sunset shed, and he knew all I could not say, and was quite content.

Ah! if only we two could have passed then beyond the reach of time and earth's mischance!

And yet I know not that I would have it so, for in sorrow of heart and loneliness I have found depths and heights all unknown to smoother ways. Love once born can never die; many waters cannot quench it; neither time nor tears can touch it. Ask me not how long we walked together on this beautiful earth—this earth we call unhappy because we will not see the blessed gifts of God around us—for in truth I cannot tell; love is its own eternity, and knows nor change, nor parting, nor death, and when he passed onward with the dawn-light of the eternal morning on his face he bade me bless God for the happy sunshine of the day gone by and walk patiently among the lengthening shadows until the twilight merges into that eternal dawn.

And now when the wild March wind beats about the doors, or the blackbirds sing at sunset after the rain, the lonely years slip and shrink together and roll away, and my spirit carries me back beside the barren Baltic shores, shining now all transfigured and beautiful through the mist of many tears, in the sunlight of immortal love.

WHEN THOU ART GONE.

WHEN thou art gone, what will be life to me ?

Oh, less than yonder empty shell that lies,
Flung by the motion of the restless sea,
Broken upon the shore. My spirit cries
To thee, and nestles in thy sheltering breast,
Serene and tranquil as the days glide on ;
But ah, my love, where shall it find its rest
When thou art gone ?

To thee I owe the gladness of the days,
The glory of the nights—the melody
Of bird-songs dedicated to thy praise ;
For all sweet things of earth seem part of thee.
I have been joyous as the laughing flowers,
Making thy heart my tribunal and throne.
Whose hand shall guide—whose voice enchant the hours
When thou art gone ?

Yet thou, that art my universe—in whom
Health, life, hope, joy, for me embodied live—
Be still my star, resplendent through the gloom,
Lighting the way whereon I toil and strive.
Direct and conquer my rebellious will,
Bend down those eyes that on my youth have shone,
Lend me the grace of thy protection still
When thou art gone.

MARIE CONNOR.

DUCHESS FRANCES.

By SARAH TYTLER,

AUTHOR OF "CITOYENNE JACQUELINE," "SAINT MUNGO'S CITY," "LADY BELL," ETC.

CHAPTER XVI.

ADVERSITY.

FRANCES' grief was stormy and overwhelming for the hour during which she remembered vividly her young lover as well as her young husband and the father of her children, in the happy days spent at the gay family house at Knightsbridge, where she found abundant consolation for the mortification she had sustained at the hands of Harry Jermyn.

Cherry wept with her cousin for the loss of the gallant gentleman her courteous host. Elizabeth de Gramont, with Anthony and the younger Hamilton brothers, mourned a brother who had done them honour. Frances found no lack of sympathy, while she was speedily roused from her personal grief to face the worldly ruin of herself and her three young daughters, and to fight against it with all the energy of a strong fighter who had never affected to be anything else than set on temporal prosperity.

Cherry, in her double capacity of companion to her cousin and *gouvernante* to the children, was present at the interview which Frances sought and got from Louis XIV. in one of the antechambers of the Louvre. Not only the young widow, but the little girls and Cherry thrown into the bargain, were all in the deepest weeds, with sable mantles and veils trailing on the ground, so that the wearers formed a lugubrious procession. Louis had no taste for the lugubrious. He hastily raised Frances from her kneeling attitude, and signified to the others, who had been kneeling also, to rise likewise, expressed briefly but not ungracefully his regret for the loss of a brave servant, graciously announced that Madame la Comtesse's name would be at once placed on the pension list of France, and passed on, dismissing the sufferers and the subject from his royal consideration as swiftly as possible.

"At least we shall be better off than the nuns of Soppington," said Frances hysterically to Cherry, referring to an old tradition down at Holywell that the nuns from a neighbouring nunnery had brought their dry crusts to soak in the well, hence the name.

Frances and her brood were removed from starvation, from penury even, while it need hardly be said that she regarded her pension as far beneath her deserts and those of her late husband. She had come, too, to look on Cherry's devotion as a matter of course. It was the girl's nature to cling all the more closely in adversity, so that if she had been Frances' servant before, it stood to reason that she was her slave now.

Frances was not under the necessity of quitting her *faubourg* and *hôtel*. She had simply to mount with her family a stair or two higher, and deposit herself under the garrets, which, to be sure, were let, in their turn, to mechanics and sewing-girls. But from this elevated region it was impossible for the pensioned widow either to claim or dispense her share of the festivities as she had been accustomed to do. Soon she chafed violently against the deprivation, for Frances would have been content in all sincerity to lament her husband in a whirl of company, from which she could not live apart. Looking back on that generation, it seems as if its sorrows and joys were curiously muddled up together, when they did not receive an exaggerated expression individually, and certainly Frances bore no resemblance to the young widow her contemporary, who would have no light about her save that of candles for three, and never went out of doors for five years. Yet, alas! for the instability of all things, intensest grief included, it remains to be said of this Penelope that at the end of nine years she entertained a passion of love for the man who became her first husband's successor.

Frances murmured indignantly at the niggardliness of the king and country her brave husband had served with his life; though if France had been forced to pension every soldier of fortune who fought and fell in her cause, her pension list would have been full indeed.

Count George's widow complained pettishly of Count George's sister, Countess Philibert de Gramont, for not exerting herself to get more done for her relations, and for being so heartless as to resume the round of splendid gaieties from which Countess George was—not so much because of her widowhood as because of her narrow means—thenceforth excluded. No doubt it lent an additional sting to the retirement she loathed, that it was compulsory, not voluntary.

Anthony Hamilton had no real love for courts and crowds, he preferred to woo the muse in the sylvan shades of St. Germain, and would fain have induced his sprightly sister to withdraw from pernicious and perilous gilt fetters, to join him in his peaceful retreat. He politely pressed Frances to take the initiative, but she flatly refused, to Cherry's great disappointment, and was more angry than her sister-in-law Elizabeth showed herself at the idea of being buried alive in a forest, always except when the court was there.

A couple of years after Frances was left a widow, two events happened over in England which seemed to give the finishing touch to her misfortunes. Sister Sarah, as wilful and hot-headed as the little Sal of old, or as her sister Frances at all times, married at the age of eighteen the man of her choice, handsome, silver-tongued John Churchill, who had this supreme merit in her eyes, that while faithless to all else, he was ever faithful to her. She thus dealt a death blow for the time to the fond hopes entertained by her mother,—even by Frances in her adversity—that Sarah was to make such a good sale of her beauty and wit, she was to redeem and elevate the fortunes of the whole family. So little likelihood was there of this desirable result at the time of Sarah's marriage, and so great was the opposition apprehended from the heads of the houses of Churchill and Jennings, that the ceremony was performed privately, though it was graced by the presence of Mary Beatrice, Duchess of York. For some months afterwards, while Colonel Churchill rejoined the army abroad, his wife continued to bear the name of "Mrs. Jennings," to which she was no longer entitled.

"So Sal has gone and done for herself as I did," remarked Frances sardonically. "Well, I suppose there is a fate in these things, but I can see now it is monstrous hard on madam my mother. An' I thought my Bess, or Fanny, or Moll would play me such a trick, I'd lodge them in so many nunneries at once."

"But, but, cousin," remonstrated Cherry, hesitating and stammering, as the two walked together in those famous old gardens of the Luxembourg, with their "knots" of box, basins for "conservatory for snow," and "grove of tall elms, cut into a starr, every ray being a walk whose center is a large fontaine," "you do not mean to say you are sorry—that you regret having married as you did?"

"Having married my poor George, you mean?" said Frances straight out. "Not after I once saw his face," she admitted, with a little quiver of her voice. "He was as handsome as the day, as Churchill in quite another fashion. He was so brave, so loyal, so enamoured. Ah! who could have resisted my young hero?" she cried passionately. But I ought not to have been free to receive George Hamilton's addresses," she added after a moment's pause, in a totally different tone. "Before I set eyes upon him I played my cards vastly ill, and it was not so much that I had not mother-wit as that I was full of perversity and devilry. Take example by what I've come to, Cherry Thornhurst, not that you have any great chance of profiting by it nowadays, for this foolish step of sister Sarah's is like to be another obstacle to the acknowledgment of your marriage, which ought to have been confirmed and proclaimed ages ago. We'll have you as middle-aged and dowdy as myself anon."

"I don't care for that," replied Cherry quickly. "If you would

only leave that subject alone, I should be greatly obliged to you, cousin. Don't you think I'm old enough to take care of myself? Not that I do not take it kind of you to spare a thought for me, when you have so many cares of your own," wound up Cherry, repenting immediately of her asperity. "I desire nothing better than to be suffered to be with you and the girls always, at least, so long as I can be of any service to you."

Frances shook her head, gloomily for her. "You ought to think of yourself, all the more that there is no one else to think of you, to purpose. You owe me no thanks, Cherry. I have not been able to do much for you. As to speaking up for any marriage as you were speaking up for mine a minute ago, or for any man, dead or alive, it ain't called for from you. Marriages and men have not done you great service."

Cherry did not answer that she was above or below bearing malice. She said nothing, but as the pair came out by the church of the Holy Innocents and Cherry saw the clerks who were employed by "poor mayds and other ignorant people" to write letters for them into the country, "every large grave-stone serving for a table," she came to the conclusion that these daughters of the people were more their own mistresses than she, or perhaps Frances and Sarah Jennings, had ever been, and to revolve in her gentle mind the dubious benefit of being so much as allied to the quality.

The second event duly announced from England was of another complexion—the death, in her twenty-sixth year, of Bab Jennings, who had married Colonel Griffith, of Hertfordshire. Poor home-loving, dutiful Bab! She had made no stir in the great world like her sisters Frances and Sarah, but her father, if not her husband, would sorely miss her. The young wife and mother was laid early to rest with her only child, Barbara, by her side, in the family burial place in St. Albans, near the girl sister Susanna and the baby brothers Ralph and John, whom Bab in her youth had held in faithful, affectionate remembrance. When she had heard of Frances's widowhood and loss of means, Bab had at once written from England to her sister a kind if formal letter, containing a remittance as large as it was in the writer's power to bestow, with many careful housewifely charges as to how Frances ought to spare and spend the money, and anxious warnings lest she—Bab, though she would try—might not have funds wherewith to renew the gift annually.

Frances had received the gratuity with a short laugh and a careless, half-scornful assertion that the whole business was just like Bab's primness and timidity.

But now, when there could come no more sisterly letters and painful calculations undertaken by Bab for her "dear old Francie's sake," the said Francie cried impulsively that she had been a lone widow woman already, before the melancholy news came, but she

would be all the more lonesome since there was no Bab thinking of her and planning for her over in England.

CHAPTER XVII.

"MARRYING AND HANGING GO BY DESTINY."

ANOTHER year passed by when one day Frances mounted to her elevated quarters in a flutter of excitement. "Cherry, Cherry, I want to speak to you," she cried. "Go away, you brats, into the balcony and see what you can see for yourselves without being seen." She unceremoniously dismissed the three damsels who had been working and chattering beside Cherry. The eldest was by this time in her thirteenth year, well-nigh the age that was all to which Cherry had attained when she went through the fantastic ceremony of marriage still binding her to Peter Thornhurst with chains of iron or of gossamer as you liked to look at them. Even the youngest maid pricked her ears to hear what had happened out of the common to which their mother did not wish the girls to be privy.

"Whom do you think I've met at my Lady Clifford's? Guess among the old friends I have not seen for many a day. Oh! stuff and nonsense, Cherry," as the hot colour flamed into poor Cherry's cheeks and then fading, left them as wan as a ghost, while the ordinarily quiet, self-controlled woman began to tremble in every limb. "As if the world contained but one man and he thy fickle, mean-spirited partner; as if it was well to waste a thought on a fellow who, so far as he is concerned, has turned his back on thee. The man I speak of is worth a hundred sneaking, sordid-natured Peter Thornhursts. Why, he was my most devoted servant once upon a time, and I can tell you it would not take much to bring him to my feet again, though I'm as thin as a whipping-post, my lint white locks are beginning to fall off, I'm thirty years of age, the mother of another man's children, and my pension is a miserable pittance, a disgrace to King Louis. I only whisper it to you lest he issue a *lettre de cachet* and lay me in the Castle of Vincennes, or with the common herd in the Bastille."

"You have not said your friend's name," Frances was reminded by Cherry, who had got time to recover her composure.

"Haven't I? Then it is roystering Dick Talbot," a little defiantly, "and he swears he is as much a widower as I am a widow, for Madam Talbot, Mrs. Boynton that was, languished out of existence last March and left him with a solitary chick of a girl whom he hath left behind him in Ireland."

"What is he doing here?" asked Cherry dubiously. "Is he on his travels to divert his mind from his great loss?"

"Oh, this is good," cried Frances with the merriest laugh she

had laughed these three years, "as if Dick—swaggering, roving Dick—ever had a trouble which he could not whistle down the wind, or drink and dice out of mind in the space of a night! Thou silly wench, if he survived the loss of *me*, on whom he had set his heart, he could surely sustain the death of a wife who, poor soul—we'll be proper and pity her since she's dead—flung herself at his wagging head as is well known."

"He must have consented, cousin," objected Cherry with a faint smile.

"Ay, but a reluctant consent is another matter from a triumphant courtship and the desire of his heart granted to a man. You'll know that if you're ever marred with a will, Mrs. Peter."

"I think I know it already," said Cherry in a low tone.

Frances was paying no heed to her. "No, no, poor old Dick—he do look a bit battered and the worse of the wear—hath had more serious matters on hand than his wife Catherine's death. Hast forgot that all England is agog at the present moment with its last mare's nest of a Popish plot? The villain Oates is false-swearing people's heads off by scores and scores. Naturally, being a Catholic, my beadsman Dick has been in trouble, as for that matter when was he out of it? He was accused of holding his Holiness's commission as commander of the forces in Ireland and clapped into prison in Dublin Castle, from which he made his escape. He is a regular hero of romance is brawny Dick, if one could believe a tithe of the tale he tells of his perils and adventures. But you will see and judge for yourself, Cousin Cherry, since my former swain hath announced his intention of puffing and blowing up all these stairs. I told him the number of steps fair and above-board, and that he would find me as poor as a church mouse at the top when he comes to wait on me to-morrow. But nothing I could say would hinder my gentleman from paying his duty. Dick Talbot is a gentleman, though I warn you he ain't any softer or tamer since I last sighted him, and, good lack! he was wild enough then."

Cherry saw for herself and was by no means favourably impressed, though Dick Talbot was sufficiently restrained by Frances' presence and influence to treat Cherry then, and during the whole of their future relations, with a half-sulky respect, instead of with the unbridled insolence and shameful licence which he was apt to display in his behaviour to women.

Ruffians like Dick, whether high or low, do not as a rule improve with years. The gloss of gallantry and daring which their unprincipled recklessness may have worn at first, is rubbed off and replaced by coarser elements of brutality. Even the elegant prodigal Comte Philibert de Gramont had not stood the test of time well. He was rapidly passing into a selfish, heartless voluptuary, whose transparent distorted vanity made him render himself ridiculous by boasting of conquests he had never achieved and of

excesses in which—wastrel as he was—he had never indulged. He could even descend to the meanness of availing himself of the literary capacity of his kinsman in exile and reduced circumstances, to write Gramont's memoirs while he, Gramont, a wealthy nobleman, after he was restored to his patrimony, pocketed the whole proceeds of the transaction. If the refined Gramont had fallen so low, what was to be expected from Dick Talbot? He was now well advanced in middle life, with all his vices intensified and aggravated. His stately figure was overgrown and showed traces of premature infirmity. His fine face was swollen and bloated with self-indulgence. His regardless habit of speech had grown upon him till it earned him the unenviable sobriquet of "Lying Dick Talbot."* The volleys of blasphemous oaths with which he was given to seasoning his discourse were enough to have had him thrust out of any respectable—not to say reverent—house. His boisterous bragging was so exaggerated, and his violence when contradicted so destitute of the slightest restraint, that people began to think he was half mad, or on the way to be mad.

This was the man—satyr rather than man—who after she had broken off from him in her youth and his prime, fascinated Frances Hamilton in her maturity, whom she fascinated afresh and ruled to the last, if ever rational human being ruled a brute and lunatic. Surely it was a curious and notable detail in the history of these two famous sisters Frances and Sarah Jennings that they won, and held in mastery, throughout their married lives, two men so widely apart and yet so far alike in their defiance of the bonds of honour and the obligations of honesty as Dick Talbot and John Churchill.

The attractions which Dick Talbot had for Frances were complicated and manifold, and she did not refrain from pleading them to her cousin Cherry. She cared for him for old sake's sake, he talked to her and reminded her of the palmy days when she reigned a young queen of beauty and wit at Whitehall and St. James's. His conversation and visits, gross and offensive as they might appear to a strait-laced young madam, were a welcome relief to Frances, who had never pretended to be a saint, and could not reconcile herself to the deadly dulness and dreariness of her pinched and forlorn widowhood under the garrets. It was not to say that she had forgotten George Hamilton, who could not come back to her and her children, though she were minded, to replace him by one who had cared for her, in his own way, long before George had ever beheld her or she George. After all, perhaps, Dick Talbot was a better match for her in their common knowledge of the highly-spiced wicked world than her simple-minded soldier had been, and still the worldly advantages would all be on the side of Frances and her children. This was notoriously true in spite of Dick Talbot's being, like herself, under a cloud, and though

* Macaulay.

he must have been playing ducks and drakes with the great fortune which in former days Gramont had reckoned at forty thousand, and at the present date was measured at a paltry three or four thousand a year. But even three thousand odds were not to be despised in the meanwhile ; and when the treasonable bill for excluding the Duke of York from the succession to the throne was set aside, and James ruled in the place of Charles, then Dick Talbot would emerge from his passing obscurity, and it would go hard with him and Frances if they did not redeem his fortunes and plume their feathers with the best.

The last inducement to yield to Dick's frantically eager suit, was supplied by the tacit disapproval of the Hamilton family, who naturally did not like to have Count George's place filled by such a successor. In an unwary moment Elizabeth de Gramont asserted disdainfully that ages ago, even before Dick Talbot had paid his first court to Frances Jennings, the redoubtable man of many loves had been at her—Elizabeth's feet, where she had let him lie till he took himself off. How could Frances prove her disbelief of this affronting tale more effectually than by marrying Dick Talbot straightway?

If opposition to Frances' sovereign will had always been like holding up a red rag to a bull, it was as well for all concerned that Cherry was not in a position to contradict her patroness. When she found remonstrance was useless she could only regret to the bottom of her heart, stand by with shame and mortification and see the knot tied which in 1679 made Countess George, Madam Talbot.

Young Catherine Talbot, a girl of the age of the younger Hamiltons, was brought from Ireland and installed in the common nursery and schoolroom in the old Paris *hôtel*, to which another baby girl came later, little Charlotte Talbot, the last of Frances' children, to be placed in her cousin Cherry's arms and to find her best cradle there.

There is no reason for supposing that Frances did not act with a kind of rough and ready justice and good nature towards her dead rival's child. The few proofs are all to the contrary. Catherine was certainly closely associated with the other girls. There is a picture still extant in which she is represented a girl in her first teens, in company with her half-sister, the child Charlotte. But the elder girl did not live long to try her step-mother's fairness and kindness. Catherine Talbot died in 1684, five years after her father's second marriage and a year before the death of King Charles, and the succession of King James rendered it safe and advisable that the combined household should quit France and be established either in England or Ireland.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“THE KING IS DEAD: LONG LIVE THE KING!”—A HARVEST OF
HONOURS AND DIGNITIES—FINDING HUSBANDS FOR THREE
PORTIONLESS GIRLS.

WHETHER or not Dick Talbot in the year of his marriage accompanied his master the Duke of York to England, where the duke was not suffered to stay, but was sent with his duchess down to Scotland, out of the public eye, while the bill for his exclusion from the royal succession on account of his public profession of the Roman Catholic faith, was still pressed upon Parliament by his political opponents and by the alarmed defenders of the Protestant religion, it is certain that when Charles made a death as unedifying as his life among his dissolute courtiers and rapacious mistresses at Whitehall, and James was proclaimed king, the Talbots were not far to seek. Husband and wife with their family of young girls and the family friend and ungrudging servant Cherry Thornhurst in the train of the mistress of the establishment, hurried home to come in for a share of the largesses to be distributed at the beginning of a reign.

It seemed to Frances that she had a double and triple right to what favours were going. She could bring forward Dick Talbot's sufferings at no distant date for religion and the king, and at an earlier date George Hamilton's deprivations and expatriation for the same cause, together with her own claims as a former maid-of-honour to the late Duchess of York, the mother of the Princesses Mary and Anne, the sole survivors of Anne Hyde's family of eight children. From Mary, Princess of Orange, the wife of the stout, surly champion of civil and religious liberty against *le Grand Monarque*, Frances had indeed nothing to hope. As for good-natured, dull Princess Anne, who had already been married to her equally lymphatic partner with the comprehensive generality of his favourite axiom, *est-il possible?* what benefits were to be expected from that source were certain to be monopolized by sister Sarah and her brilliant supple soldier of fortune. Why, Colonel Churchill was already created Baron Churchill of *Sandridge*, a special reference to his wife's future inheritance of her father's estate in Hertfordshire by the exclusion of her elder sister Frances, which was not calculated to improve the doubtful relations between the sisters. Still when one's interest is in question pride and a well warranted sense of injury must be put in the pocket, while there might be the reversion of sundry pickings from this quarter. And there was always the king himself for a sanguine woman to pin her faith to. If all tales were true Frances had not been particularly respectful to him in the old days, when strong-minded, sensible Anne Hyde was her mistress and his duchess;

but now the importunate claimant considered that her royal master would be an ingrate indeed if he declined to consider the obligations he owed to this formidable representative of both the Hamiltons and Talbots.

Frances had many greedy rivals who fast became her traducers to serve their own ends. Conspicuous among them was my Lord Perth, who had lately apostatised from his religion in the most flagrantly obliging manner. He earnestly advised his royal master, in strict confidence, to send Madam Talbot back to France on the plea of the French air being the best for her health. Perth described her to her old acquaintance as thoroughly detested in the country of her adoption; in fact, she was believed to have "the blackest heart" between the English Channel and the Pyrenees. But that was only Perth's opinion—the statement of a notorious sycophant and time-server, whose sincerity in his new religion was of such a doubtful character that within a few weeks of adopting it he married within the forbidden degrees of kindred, and did not so much as say "by your leave" to his holy father the Pope. Perth himself was living in a glass house so far as any esteem or respect from his countrymen went, therefore he ought not to have been so ready to throw stones at Frances. James the Second was not famous for his wisdom, but at least he knew better than to take Perth's advice in this matter.

Cherry, who asked nothing from anybody and for reasons of her own shrank into the background, looked round on England and London, the very language of whose inhabitants struck unfamiliarly on her ears—her dazzled eyes not taking in half of what she saw. It was well-nigh as strange to her as to the foreign-bred young girls, her kinswomen. She had left the country an unformed, impressionable girl of fourteen; she returned to it a quiet, subdued woman of thirty-three. At the same time, her very quietness and unselfishness had served to preserve her youth—had bathed it, so to speak, in a perennial flood of patience and devotion to others. This had kept it wonderfully fresh and sweet to the core, so that there was no room left for the fierce ravages of angry passions, and the slow but sure corroding of chronic egotism and discontent. It was no worn, haggard face which Cherry brought back to her native shore, but one fair and peaceful in its mature beauty.

In this respect Cherry presented a great contrast to her cousin Frances at forty-one years of age. Frances had certainly missed the bountiful buxomness in the three "f's" courteously accorded to her time of life. She was as she had said, as lean as a greyhound, with a needle-like sharpness in her little person which somehow fitted in not only with its intrepid spirit, but with its air of distinction. In spite of another assertion of hers, she had as yet no more occasion to wear a wig than to use a paint pot. Her complexion—very similar to that which her sister Sarah retained to

old age, as was reported by the use of honey water at her toilet—was brilliant as ever; and her blonde hair, though it might have grown a shade darker and be a trifle less luxuriant, was still sufficiently near flaxen in hue, and plentiful enough, to form a striking erection under the pyramid of *cornettes*—stiffly starched, and wired loops of lace with which ladies were beginning to adorn (?) their heads. But after all, these cheeks persistently rosy in their thinness, and that piled-up mass of fair curls above the brow and eyes—along and around which a fine network of lines and curves were being drawn as by a fairy pencil, simply helped to convey the strong suspicion of hardness and sharpness, of bold self-assertion and defiant clutching at what she reckoned her due, which was now a marked feature in Madam Talbot's looks and address. Many thought it a serious detraction from the renowned beauty of the one, and the courtly grace of the other.

To Cherry, the juvenile marriage which had preceded her departure from England was like a far-away dream which might have all but faded out of her mind, had there not remained the solid fact, however unsubstantial all else had turned out, that Peter Thornhurst was a real living person who might cross her path any day. This consideration made just the difference in Cherry's circumstances which marks off a living from a dead sorrow. It could hardly be said that in her case it was hope which kept alive despair, and caused her still to brood pensively at intervals on her youthful espousal and her boy husband. She had long ceased to indulge even the most trembling hope in the matter. It was in fear and affront, and not in womanly pride and yet in dawning expectation, that Cherry kept close to the Talbots' lodging, and never left the company of Frances and her girls during their stay in London. She did not so much as venture, though her faithful heart rebelled at the omission, to go on an independent errand to the Hills'. She only went with Frances on her brief visit to Speedwell Lane, and found that their uncle was bedridden and their aunt forced to "pluck up" health and strength for both. The family were scattered. The old people depended chiefly for help on their soldier son, who was already a major in his Majesty's service, and on young Abigail, who had got a post at court like her cousins before her. To be sure, it was a changed and reformed court; at least, Princess Anne's household, into which Lady Churchill had introduced Abigail, was a model of virtue and discretion, while the princess and Prince George were bulwarks of the Protestant faith and the British constitution.

Cherry dared not risk meeting Peter Thornhurst in any public or private place—she thought if she met him she would die—though for her part she had from the beginning, as soon as he had demanded the renunciation, given up every claim on his liberty. She would fain have laid down his name also, but that would have been impossible in the past without Frances's concur-

rence, and in the present it was difficult to the verge of impossibility, and needed more people than the person principally interested to abjure a title long borne.

Meek as Cherry was, it was not the least part of her punishment on account of an offence for which she was not responsible, to come back to her country and lurk in the background like an evil-doer, because she would never dream of brazening out the misadventure like the principal offender.

The explanation of Frances' supineness in Cherry's affairs after her frequent declarations to the contrary, lies in a nutshell. Her own affairs had latterly engrossed her to the exclusion of every other person's. She had gradually dropped the talk of compelling Peter Thornhurst to acknowledge his wife Cherry. She, Madam Talbot, had come to the conclusion, when she thought at all on a subject of such minor importance, that things were better to remain as they were. In the meanwhile, Cherry had been free to bed and board in her cousin's house all these years. She had been brought up like a gentlewoman—a French gentlewoman to boot. She was still very handsome, handsomer than any of her young cousins, as their mother owned with rare clear-sightedness and magnanimity. Perhaps if all the advantages were gained that were hoped for from King James's accession, it might be a throwing away of Madam Thornhurst to inflict her on the reluctant squire of Three Elms, or to speak more correctly, to inflict him on her. Greater fortunes might be in store for Cherry. It might be better to get her early marriage dissolved, and, after Bess, Fanny and Moll were settled in life, to settle Cherry afresh in a manner more suitable to her attractions and her powerful connections. But there was time enough to think of that; and indeed, Cherry was not destined to meet Peter Thornhurst next in England.

King James, now that he was come to the throne, did not show himself so ready with his largesses and his openly proclaimed preference for old friends and members of his creed as they had fondly anticipated. He had got a considerable fright by the bill of exclusion from the succession which only the royal reprobate Charles's fidelity to his brother's interests had prevented from becoming law. James began by reigning warily, and the episode of the unhappy Monmouth's rebellion, though his uncle punished it relentlessly, served still further to shake the king's nerves; while the queen, Mary of Modena, who had been so humble as a duchess and was so haughty during her brief period of sovereign power, was little likely in her pride of rank, of an unsullied character and a decorous court, to welcome as an addition to her suite what was left of the frolicsome La Belle Jennings, the privileged maid-of-honour of Mary's predecessor, one of the audacious leaders in Charles's exceedingly free and easy court.

However, a good time was coming, when James should have found, or lost his senses, and in the meantime he gave an earnest

of his good-will to his former groom of the chambers. The king appointed Dick general-in-chief of the army in Ireland, in spite of the awkward drawback that, unlike his brother-in-law, he had no knowledge of the science of war. The sole warrant for his competence lay in the cut-throat courage of a duellist, for which he had been notorious in his youth.

Thereupon Frances set out bag-and-baggage for the native country of her first, no less than second, husband, to lay the foundation of her triumphant rule in Dublin. To understand what a journey to Ireland was in those days it is necessary to refer to the adventures of the viceroy and his wife, presumably Lord and Lady Clarendon, when they made the same progress that very year. They were five hours in traversing the fourteen miles between St. Asaph and Conway. The men of the party had to walk from Conway to Beaumaris, while the lady was borne in a litter. Either then or on another occasion about the date referred to, a carriage had to be taken to pieces and carried on peasants' shoulders to the Menai Straits.* Frances' expedition to York in the train of the duchess, and her voyage to Dieppe were nothing by comparison. It sounds creditable to the general nerves and constitutions of the travellers that they all arrived safe and sound. Frances with her blooming girls, the child Charlotte and their guardian angel Cherry, were hailed with tremendous yells and shouts of applause by the natives. These were half-naked savages trooping out of turf huts, men in long frieze coats, and such of the gentlemen in square-tailed coats much the worse for wear, laced with tarnished gold or silver, as professed the Roman Catholic religion, objected to the deed of settlement confirming to the Protestant Saxons the lands they and their predecessors had won from the original possessors, and agreed in hailing Dick Talbot as their champion and deliverer.

Frances, though she rode rough-shod over the *canaille*, enjoyed being a popular heroine, especially when the distinction landed her in no meaner place than Dublin Castle. There she shared the prestige, and of course quarrelled rousingly with the lady of the Lord-Lieutenant Clarendon—the brother of her old mistress, Anne Hyde, and brother-in-law to the king. There the little lady set about a business which she felt she had too long neglected. She left Dick Talbot to hector and rampage, deprive gallant Protestant officers of their commissions, and replace them by Roman Catholic gentlemen, equally gallant it may be, but no more disciplined to the trade of arms than their chief was. That was Dick's business, which he mismanaged frightfully, and when nobody would believe his frantic protestations and dissembling oaths he would heave his three-cornered hat into the fire, and his wig after it, in proof of his good faith. Let them burn, they were

* "Letters of Dorothy Osborne."

the generalissimo's, not his lady's, and the country supplied them. She was not sure that there was not method in his madness. All over England people were setting themselves to sing "Lilliburoo" in derisive hatred of the Irish and their claims. But here beyond St. George's Channel Dick Talbot's name flourished in the chorus of many a national ditty shouted between "sups of potteen" over tables of deal and oak, in farmhouse and hall kitchens, or roared in the teeth of the wild west wind and the thunder of the Atlantic breakers, after drill, among the bogs, or the rocks on the shore.

Dick Talbot could be trusted to mind his own concerns, if not the army's. It was madam's duty to take fortune at its high tide, and marry her daughters in a manner becoming their mother and step-father, as well as to crow over and cow all the fine ladies in Dublin. She did the first with so bare a face and so high a hand that gentlemen over their claret slapped their garters, guffawed and betted on her chances, and ladies over their cards forgot who held "matadore" and who "spadillo," to ask breathlessly what unfortunate victim had succumbed to her open attacks, and to screw up their mouths spitefully at her amazonian tactics. Riders in the Phoenix Park said freely that Madam Talbot charged her husband—a brutal, ungovernable tyrant where others were concerned, but always an obedient servant to her—to bring over a choice of husbands for her daughters on his numerous journeys to and from London.

A little compulsion had to be used, since none of Frances' girls equalled their mother in beauty and wit, as little Sal's daughters were said in days to come to rival their mother. The young Hamiltons could not afford to let slip the season of youth and the first gloss of their French education.

Frances succeeded fairly, making her three elder daughters peeresses before she became a peeress in her own person. Elizabeth was married at the age of nineteen, in 1685, to Lord Rosse. Two years afterwards Frances Hamilton, at the same age, and her sister Mary, in her eighteenth year, were married respectively to Lord Dillon and Lord Kingsland.

"Now, Cousin Cherry, I'll do your job," announced Frances briskly, in the glee of her success on the night of Mary's wedding. "It is your turn at last, since we need not wait for the disposal of little Charley—'better late than never.'"

(To be continued.)

SOCIAL ECHOES.

By MRS. HUMPHRY.

THE echoes of the early season were all of wedding bells, some faintly sounding from beyond the seas, and others ringing loudly in our ears. The later echoes are all of church bells, this being the Lenten season, when early services and piscatorial dinners are in demand. Those who live very near the churches never quite get the echo of the bells out of their ears. They are wakened by them in the morning, and dream of them at night. To many thousands of us that is all the difference made by Lent. There are more bells, and fish is very dear. Those who attend early services fasting are often extremely pensive throughout the day. The gloom of their thoughts has occasionally been mistaken for a peevish irritability, born of early rising and the rejection of the matinal cup of tea. But no kindly person would willingly interpret thus a sombre eye and silent lip. The owners are probably sunk far in the abysmal depths of their own personality, and will emerge at Easter, "happiest time of all the glad new year." Were it not for the east wind, Easter would be too good for a naughty world. We have all the summer before us, and the sun shines brightly upon us as we ruralize and find primroses and violets and a stray anemone in sheltered corners of the woods. The larks sing above us so loud and so clear that the air seems full of them, and we feel happy in hearing them till we turn some corner and receive a greeting from the east wind full in our faces and lungs. Our climate will never spoil us with any surfeit of good things. It behaves much as Squeers did with his new pupils, whom he knocked off their seats with one hand and on again with the other. Our island atmosphere disables us with heat one day, and almost freezes us the next. It behaves like a shrewish step-mother, but perhaps we enjoy her rare smiling moods all the more intensely for the habitual frown she wears.

The season, with its pictures, its concerts, its functions, royal, social and professional, lies all before us where to choose, and though we never accomplish half of what we mean to do, we yet enjoy the busy days as they flit by. The coming season is likely to be an interesting one in various ways, and if only the weather be not so gloomy and forbidding as it was throughout the whole of last year's spring and summer, we may have a very good time. The long grey days of last season were depressing enough to spoil anything. Who will ever forget the poor Silver Fête, with its leaden skies and cataracts of anything but silver rain? The mud about the balloon was such as to make a deep impression upon the memory. It was like that with all the *fêtes* and functions of 1888.

May the "odd number" of the present season bring with it its proverbial luck!

In matters dramatic we are well off in anticipation. By the time these lines appear, the new play by Mrs. Arthur Stannard (John Strange Winter) will have been played at a *matinée* by a strong cast, and the public will have given its verdict upon the successor of the very successful "Bootles' Baby."

Mr. Jones has taken as the motto of his new play, "Matt Ruddock," soon to be produced at the Haymarket, these lovely lines from Thomas Dekker's song, "The Happy Heart: "

Art thou poor, yet hast thou golden slumbers?
O sweet content.

Art thou rich, yet is thy mind perplexed?
O punishment.

Dost thou laugh to see how fools are vexed
To add to golden numbers golden numbers?
O sweet content!

Mr. and Mrs. Beerbohm Tree are to play the principal parts, which have been specially written for them. It is always a pleasure to see how a new part is thoughtfully treated and skilfully worked out by this artistic and intellectual couple. Mr. Conway, Mr. Weedon Grossmith and Miss Rose Norreys are all to play in the new piece, the present date fixed for its production being Easter Monday. The scenes are laid in London, and money-making is to be the subject, treated from the point of view which Ruskin had in his mind when he suggested that "the breakers (in a certain picture) might have more humanity in them."

With Mr. and Mrs. Kendal at the Court, in a play by Mr. Pinero, those who love to be made to cry must be happy. This gentleman, who is now our chief dramatist, has finished his new play for Mr. Hare, and to it all dramatic and cultivated London is looking forward with pleased expectation. The cast is a very strong one, including Mr. John Hare himself, Mr. Sidney Brough and Miss Kate Rorke.

The unfortunate Olympic Theatre has dragged yet another victim into bankruptcy, in the person of Miss Agnes Hewitt. When Shakespeare makes Cæsar say, "I like to have men about me that are fat;" and again, "That Cassius hath a lean and hungry look," I am sure the dramatist meant by "fat" a prosperous and lucky man, and expressed the reverse of this in the adjectives he applied to Cassius. The people who are bent on getting on in the world, ought carefully to avoid unlucky persons and unlucky places. Of course, no one believes in luck, as such, an adventitious quality that cannot be logically accounted for. But on the other hand, there cannot be the very smallest doubt that there *are* lucky individuals whose success in life cannot be entirely attributed to their wisdom and knowledge of affairs; and that others are just as consistently unfortunate in all their undertakings as the first are happy. It is as well to be guided by this

certain, though mysterious, quality. I know a stockbroker who would not dream of taking shares in any company in which a notoriously unlucky man had invested. The most tempting speculation fails to attract him when "Jonah," as he calls him, "is in the same ship." Unfortunately the latter is not always unlucky. If he were, he would be worth his weight in gold to other men, as a kind of human sign-post, to point out dangerous undertakings.

The Olympic Theatre has ruined many people, each of whom has had a natural confidence in their own power to "change the luck" of the unprosperous building. Will any one have the courage to try again? If not, it would be an excellent house for the Salvation Army, being situated in the very heart of the densely populated district of Drury Lane.

Mr. Wilson Barrett's play, "Nowadays," at the Princess's Theatre, has given him a foremost place among our dramatists, or perhaps I ought to say "melodramatists." The moral is excellent, but not unduly obtruded, and the author plays the principal part in his usual picturesque manner.

Mr. E. J. Lonnen takes his benefit on All Fools' Day, a date which he emphasizes with much seriousness in his advertisements. Though particulars of the performance are not yet announced, there is no rashness in predicting that it is certain to be an excellent one, with plenty of fun in it.

Among the new and popular songs is a beautiful one by Mr. Hamish MacCunn, the young Scotch composer, who has lately made such a name for himself in the musical world. The title is "The Ash Tree," and the words, written by Mr. Thomas Davidson, are exquisitely pathetic, especially when sung. They run as follows :

There grows an ash by my bow'r door,
And a' its boughs are buskit braw,
In fairest weeds o' simmer green,
And birds sit singin' on them a'.
Oh, cease your sangs, ye blithesome birds,
And o' your liltin' let me be;
Ye bring deid simmers frae their graves
To weary me.

There grows an ash by my bow'r door,
And a' its boughs are clad in snaw,
The ice-drap hings at ilka twig,
And soft the nor' wind soughs thro' a'.
Oh, cease thy mane, thou nor'lan' wind,
And o' your wailing let me be;
Ye bring deid winters frae their graves
To weary me.

I wad fain forget them a',
Remember'd good but deepens ill,
As gleids o' licht far seen by nicht
Mak the near mirk but mirker still.
Then silent be, thou dear auld tree,
O' a' thy voices, let me be;
Ye bring the deid years frae their graves
To weary me.

LONDON SOCIETY.

MAY, 1889.

"SHEBA."

A STUDY OF GIRLHOOD.

By "RITA,"

AUTHOR OF "DAME DURDEN," "DARBY AND JOAN," "THE LADY NANCY,"
"GRETCHEN," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A NEW IDEA.

THE next afternoon when Sheba came home, she found Count Pharamond established in the drawing-room, entertaining and being entertained by her mother.

The door was open and she had looked in on passing, so there was no help but to enter and return the count's polite greeting.

He thought she looked quite as handsome as on the previous night. Her face was flushed with rapid exercise, and the cool wind; her great eyes shone like stars beneath the dark velvet brim of her hat.

There was something eager and glad about the expression of her face, for she had just parted from Meredith, who had met her and walked half-way home with her. They had discussed many things, chiefly music; and he had told her he should remain here with the company for at least two months more; if, after then, he had to proceed to Queensland, he should leave the child with old Müller, so as not to interrupt his studies.

"You are doing him so much good," he had added gratefully. "He is not so dull or old-fashioned as he used to be, and he talks of you so much. I think you have quite won his heart."

As she shook hands with Count Pharamond those words were still ringing in her ears.

She felt too happy to be distant and cold, as on the previous night, and though she avoided his eyes, and felt his compliments jar on her ear, she yet was gracious enough to satisfy her mother.

In his way Count Pharamond was a brilliant and cultivated man, a man of the world and of society such as Sheba and her mother had never entered—the light, frothy, brilliant society of French *salons*, and London drawing-rooms, and clubs.

He talked to them of celebrated people, of art, fashion, politics; talked well and brilliantly, but with a certain superficial polish that Sheba's keen ear detected.

Still it was pleasant to hear of that great world from which the ocean separated her, and of people whose names were only familiar to her through newspaper gossip or the medium of their own works: Dickens, Thackeray, Lever, George Eliot; these great names were rattled over by the glib tongue of Pharamond as if they were those of everyday personal acquaintances.

He had anecdotes of each, amusing or interesting, as the case might be. But nothing interested Sheba so much as to hear of George Eliot, whose "Mill on the Floss" she had just been reveling in, and of whose history she was entirely ignorant.

She noted as she put her eager questions that her mother and the count exchanged looks, that Mrs. Levison seemed fidgetty and uncomfortable, and that Pharamond himself began to fence with her simple, direct inquiries, and gradually changed the subject.

However, he had contrived to make half an hour pass very quickly and pleasantly, and Sheba had almost forgotten her antagonism of the previous night.

When her mother pressed him to come again, Sheba eagerly seconded the invitation. "And you must tell me more of my adored authoress," she cried enthusiastically. "I would sooner be Marian Evans than the Queen on her throne!"

"Ah!" murmured the count, as he held the small warm hand for a moment in his own. "Ah, mademoiselle! the faiths, the enthusiasms of youth. How I envy you them. They are so beautiful, while they last."

"I hope," said Sheba gravely, "mine will last always."

Then he bowed low again, and the door closed on him, and Sheba tossed off her hat, and smoothed back the thick, heavy hair above her brow. Mrs. Levison looked at her with something of impatience and irritation in her glance.

"I do wish, Sheba," she said, "that you had not such an unfortunate knack of stumbling on questionable subjects for conversation. I positively blushed when you would persist in talking of that—writer—to the count, and he was most uncomfortable. There has been quite a scandal about her in England. A woman who has no religion, who makes her intellect her God—believes in free love, and has gone to live with a man who has left his own wife and family for her sake. These are the simple facts, and every one knows them. Men of course make a fuss over her, because she is clever; but no *lady* would visit her, she lives quite apart from society."

"She ought to be glad of that and to write much better for it," said Sheba. "I don't know what use society is to an author or an artist, except to distract and bore them."

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Levison tartly, "you don't see any use in morality either. One would think so to hear you talk. I can't think where you pick up your extraordinary ideas—unless that old curiosity whose child you teach is entertaining you with some of his."

"Mother," said the girl, suddenly growing very pale, "you never asked me *whose* child I am teaching; you would not listen to anything I said on the subject, but you are wrong if you think it is the old German, Herr Müller, who is my—my employer. The child I teach is the son of Mr. Paul Meredith, who sings at the opera."

"I'm sure I don't care," snapped Mrs. Levison. "It doesn't make the fact of your teaching any better, rather worse, if anything. You ought to be ashamed to go on with this foolish scheme, knowing how we disapprove of it. Hex is coming home next week on purpose to speak to you about it. I am in perfect terror lest Count Pharamond should hear of it. What would he think?"

"It doesn't concern me what he or any one else thinks," said Sheba proudly. "You know my reasons for doing this. If you want to blame any one, blame your husband; he has always disliked me and insulted me. This place has never been a home—never."

"You are so headstrong, so ungrateful," lamented Mrs. Levison. "I'm sure you will break my heart yet."

Sheba turned to her with a sudden impulse of tenderness.

"Don't say that, mother," she pleaded; "I do love you, and I wish I could please you, but this marriage of yours has put a gulf between us; nothing is as it was. Your husband dislikes me; Dolly persecutes me; and you—you think everything I do is wrong." The tears had brimmed into her eyes, her lips trembled. Mrs. Levison rose impatiently.

"Oh! make me no scenes, for goodness' sake, child," she said. "You are too old to be punished for disobedience; you must take your own way; only I shall never be the same to you so long as you keep up this foolish idea of teaching. I consider you are degrading yourself and me."

Then she left the room to avoid further controversy, and Sheba sank slowly down on the chair beside her, and leaning her head on her hands, sat for long gazing into the clear wood fire that burned on the hearth. The old cry was sounding in her ears—the cry that embittered her childhood and darkened her youth: "No one cares for me, no one wants me; oh! why was I ever born?"

There was not even a dumb creature now to rub its soft head

against her knee, or speak out love with bright wistful eyes as Billy had been wont to do. They had all been offered up as a sacrifice to Mr. Levison's splendid house—that house where her coming or going gladdened no one—concerned no one—save she was needed for some selfish scheme.

"They would be glad to be rid of me," she thought bitterly. "Dolly was quite right in what she said. This man must have been asked here for a purpose. They would like him to marry me, perhaps." She shuddered as she thought of the bold eyes, the smiling sensual lips. "Never," she told herself; "I would sooner die." A voice at her ear startled her—a voice repeating her own words which unconsciously she had spoken aloud.

"Sooner die than—what, Miss Sheba? It is a terrible alternative!"

She sprang to her feet blushing and confused. Beside her stood Noel Hill.

"You," she cried gladly. "Why, how did you come? I never heard you."

"No, you were too deep in thought. The servant showed me in; she said your mother was dressing, so I fear it is rather late for a conventional call. Still, I am glad to find you are visible."

"Sit down," said Sheba, drawing a chair near to the fire. "It is very cold this evening; one of these dreadful southerly winds. You look tired; where have you been?"

"Doing parish work," he said, taking the chair and watching the girl's graceful movements as she stirred the fire into a blaze and lit the lamp near by. "This is a very different place to West Shore," he went on presently, "and my rector is not very energetic, so a great deal devolves on me."

"I know Mr. Ransom by repute, as well as personally through his services and sermons," said Sheba. "What a curious man he is to be in the Church."

"There are many curious men in the Church," said Noel Hill smiling, "and always will be," he added more seriously, "as long as such things as advowsons and gifts of livings exist. But tell me, what was disturbing you just now, and what would you rather die than do?"

"Marry a man I disliked, and could not respect," said Sheba, colouring warmly beneath the gaze of those clear, searching eyes.

"Marry!" echoed Noel Hill, and his face grew a shade paler. "Has anything been said to you about—about that?"

"Mother would only be too thankful if any eligible suitor would offer," said the girl bitterly. "I foresee many more battles in store for me; I am like a square peg in a round hole here; I have never fitted my place and I never shall."

The young clergyman looked at her somewhat sadly.

"I was so in hopes that matters were better," he said. "Are you sure that you try to make the best of your position; bring your will more into subjection to theirs?"

"Why should I do that?" burst out Sheba impetuously. "I am not a child any longer. I know right from wrong, and shams from reality, and this house is full of shams; even my brother is quite changed: there is not a genuine feeling or impulse allowed. Every one tries to deceive some one else. Mother, Mr. Levison; Mr. Levison, mother; the child, her father and her step-mother both; and the united family, the world at large, which they call society. I will not do it; I never have and I never shall. If I don't like these vulgar, purse-proud people who come here, why should I pretend I do? They don't like me, I know. My mother says it is my fault, and perhaps it is; but I find books more interesting than persons, and therefore I won't leave the library to waste my evenings listening to the scandals and gossip of a set of money-worshipping Jews. It makes me sick to hear them talk," she went on impetuously. "Mrs. Abrahams abusing Mrs. Levi; and Mrs. Levi criticizing Mrs. Moss, and her dress, and her house, and her servants; and each of them summing up their neighbours' incomes to a penny, and estimating the success of their entertainments by the amount of money spent on them; and this is the life I am expected to live."

"It is hard," said Noel Hill thoughtfully. He was trying to grasp the fact that this girl had got beyond his teaching and authority; that she was a woman now, with a woman's soul, and that life was getting harder for her than even he had ever feared it would be. "Very hard," he went on thoughtfully, "but still, they cannot force you to marry any one you do not care for. Is there—is there any one they specially wish you to accept?"

"Oh!" said Sheba blushing hotly, "I have only Dolly's word for that, and you know what *she* is."

"Yes," he said, laughing with a sudden sense of relief. "I shall never forget the way in which she entertained me on the occasion of my first visit. It is a pity the child should be spoilt for the want of training."

"She will never get *that* at home," said Sheba. "Her father indulges her in everything, and mother gives way because it makes things smooth; she is a little demon for mischief-making, and she repeats all she hears with any amount of exaggeration."

"Indeed, I am afraid your home is far from pleasant," said Noel Hill slowly. "Let us hope, however, that things may mend. Are you still bent on teaching?"

"Yes," Sheba answered decidedly. "It is my one pleasure now. It does take me out of my life for a few hours at all events."

"I have been thinking," he said, "of a plan which will give you occupation and relief too. You remember telling me long ago about your admiration for women authors? Why don't you try to

write? You have talent, keen perception of character, vivid imagination and great natural facility in the putting together of ideas and fancies. Think of it. I don't say that you will succeed in doing anything very remarkable just at first, but I should strongly advise you to make the effort."

"And then——" said Sheba, rising and facing him with flushed cheeks and eager eyes.

"Then," he said, as he also rose at sound of the dressing bell, "we might see about publishing. I have a friend who is junior partner in a large publishing firm in London; if your book was worth anything he could tell me so; in any case the scheme is worth a trial."

"Worth it! I should think so," cried the girl eagerly. "How good of you to think of it. I shall never be dull or lonely now."

"Indeed, I hope so," said Noel Hill earnestly. "Your mind is too active, it must not be allowed to feed upon itself; give it employment and I think you will be less discontented, even if not positively happy."

"Happy!" said the girl with a long deep sigh. "Ah! shall I ever be that? Sometimes I doubt it."

The young man's heart gave a sudden swift throb as he met those dark passionate eyes. The thought that had sprung to life, echoed on and on long after he had left that girlish presence:

"Would to Heaven I could make you so."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A LITTLE DUST.

SHEBA went straight to her room as the door closed on Noel Hill. She felt she must be alone to think out the magnitude of the idea presented to her.

The possibility of writing had often floated dimly through her mind, but she had deemed herself, as yet, far too ignorant and impetuous to do anything deserving the honour of authorship, or publication.

It was no light thing to undertake, for nothing shallow or superficial would ever have contented her; but she felt that her ignorance of the world, and of life, and the narrow limits of her own experience were all against her.

Yet had not the Brontës lived out of the world, in a wild, lonely country district, and surrounded by all that was hard, unlovely and commonplace? Had not her adored Marian Evans been only a farmer's daughter, and brought up in a dull Methodist circle? Had not the great Charles Dickens himself begun life as a lawyer's clerk? Yet each and all had burst the trammels of their surroundings, and made their mark. True, they had all possessed genius of no uncom-

mon order, and she—she was but a young, ignorant, scarce-educated colonist; still she felt she had it within her to dare and to achieve. She loved work, and was ready to plunge into it heart and soul. It promised her a rich feast of mental dissipation. It was the one thing that could atone for the emptiness of home; she might rise above it and its petty troubles, and make for herself a deeper, broader life, that would dwarf into insignificance the mere routine of duties and occupations such as most women lived for.

All these thoughts swept like an impetuous tide through her mind, and for a time took no definite shape. But after a while a little chill crept over that first ardour of enthusiasm. How was she to begin? What form or shape was her work to take for itself?

She pushed the heavy hair from her brow, which ached with feverish excitement and the strain of long thought.

"I will ask Herr Müller," she said to herself. "He is so clever. He will be able to advise me."

Then she changed her dress, and went down into the library to read quietly till dinner was over, and after that went into the drawing-room, where a small coterie of Cohens and Leveys were assembled, and, at her mother's request, sang and played for them, as she very rarely condescended to do. It was better than cards, she told herself, and she could think without being interrupted by the perpetual chatter respecting money and dress, or domestic news, which last always took the shape of a prospective, or just completed addition to the tribe of Israel, on the part of one or other of its fruitful vines.

She slept but little that night; and being too conscientious to neglect a duty for any personal interest, she gave her young charge his usual lessons before ever broaching the subject which filled her thoughts to Herr Müller.

"I wanted to consult you," she said at last, as little Paul trotted off to fetch his coat and cap for their usual walk, "if you could spare me a few moments."

The old man looked up from his music-copying. "Consult me? but certainly, *mein Fräulein*. If you like, I will put on my hat, and we shall take our walks together."

It was an odd thing about Franz Müller, that when excited or interested on any subject, he could talk quite fluently and with scarcely any foreign idioms, but in ordinary fragmentary conversation his German nationality proclaimed itself at once.

"Will you come with us?" cried Sheba eagerly. "Oh! that is kind of you; I have been longing for a talk."

"I thought," said the old man laughing, "that our last talk had frightened you. You want no more Buddhism I suppose, eh?"

"Indeed," said Sheba indignantly, "I was not frightened. I would like to hear a great deal more on the subject. But, no, it was not of that I wished to speak." And she told him briefly, and

as calmly as she could, the suggestion of Noel Hill, and her own great longing to comply with it.

He listened attentively and seriously, looking ever and again at the glowing eager face with its changeful expressions. What an ardent, eager, enthusiastic soul this was! He sighed to think of what its future might be. He had known so many enthusiasts, so many gifted minds, and of them all none had passed through the world's furnace unscathed, few the better for the ordeal.

"To write," he said thoughtfully; "well, I have considered often you might do that, and do it well. If you feel it within you, it must come out. Only I advise but one thing, never write unless you have something to say that is worth saying. There is too much mediocrity in everything now-a-days. Every one wants to rush into print with their trash, or their errors, or their filth as the case may be. Literature is a vast sewer into which the ignorant and the vile, as well as the scholar and the thinker, pour their several contributions, and the filter which might be of use in carrying those contributions to the mind of the public, *viz.*, press censorship, is rapidly becoming useless by reason of interests, bribes, ignorance, prejudice, and the like. You are very young, and of life you know nothing. Your soul is as clear as your eyes. The deceits and coquetries and prurienches of your sex are a sealed book as yet. There is a gospel of worldly wisdom, which is the very essence of selfishness, and you have never turned of it one leaf. Of what then would you write? Of what is in your own pure soul; great thoughts, impossible dreams such as poets love. You will sing to deaf ears, *mein Fräulein*. The world doesn't heed, and doesn't want to heed, and you will waste your brains, and your health, and break your tender heart—for I think it is tender, though you seem so cold—and all for nothing."

Sheba grew very pale. Her eyes, troubled and tear-filled, looked out at the vista of green fields and waving trees, and a sense of heavy desolation and despair oppressed her.

"You would not advise me to try?" she said at last.

His quick ear noticed the trembling of her voice, and he knew his words had hurt her, and felt sorry.

"I never give advice," he said gently. "It is a thing people only ask for when their minds are made up what they shall do; but frankly, of woman's work I have not much opinion. They lack the patience, the steadiness, the studious thought, which marks the capacity of man's brains. True, there have been clever women, but then they lacked most feminine charms, and became notorious as much for personal eccentricity as for so-called genius. They have never done anything great in art, save as copyists or executants. They lack creative power, or we should have had a female Beethoven or Michael Angelo by this time."

"There has been Properzia of Bologna," suggested Sheba timidly.

"One instance to quote against hundreds, my dear. Where is the female prototype of Praxiteles or Raffaele, of Rubens or Angelico, Sophocles, Homer, Virgil, or to come to later days, Shakespeare, or Shelley, or Byron? It cannot be found. It never *will* be found, even though we throw open our academies and colleges and art schools, as they begin to cry to us to do."

"Still," persisted Sheba, "they have done something. They may do more with better training and education."

He laughed grimly. "They will write sensational fiction, whose doubtful morality enlightens one sex and disgusts the other. They will paint pretty feeble pictures of babies and animals and flowers, or dabble in sculpture with a due care for drapery and fringes and buttons! That I grant you, more—I will say ten years hence."

"You are not encouraging," said Sheba disappointedly.

"Nay, I but speak in my plain, gruff, German fashion. I said before, if you feel it within you to write, do it, and do your best; and do not haste too much, but give nothing forth to the world that has not on it the stamp of care and earnest thought. In any case work won't harm you. Perhaps it may be a safety valve."

She laughed. The colour came back to her face and lips. "I mean to *try*," she said with a flash of the dark starry eyes. "And I will take your advice, I will not hurry over my work."¹

"You will spoil your youth," grumbled the old man. "Without pleasure and gaiety, the life of the young is like a spring flower that an early frost has frozen ere it is fully opened. Be content as you are; you will be a beautiful woman one day. Men will love you. You may be a happy wife, with love in your heart and children at your breast. That is the best life for a woman. Nature meant it, and she is wiser than man, and kinder too, if we would but believe it."

Sheba's face grew warm. She thought of love as her childish dreams had pictured it. Alas! those dreams had looked so far away that she scarcely could realize them, as having played an important part in her life.

"I think," she said gravely, "I shall not be a woman whom men will love. I do not wish it."

He smiled, his odd grim smile.

"That," he said, "is probably a reason why *they* will. But time will show."

They walked on in silence for some moments. Presently he said:

"Did any one suggest this to you, or was it a thought, a desire, of your own?"

"I thought of it years ago," said Sheba colouring, "but it seemed to have gone out of my mind till a friend, the clergyman of whom I spoke to you, suggested it to me again."

"Ah," said the old man, "what is he like, this clergyman, young, clever, or conventional?"

"I think," said Sheba, "he is very good. He is not a bit like a clergyman."

"Not stiff, and solemn, and canting, eh?" asked the old German grimly.

"No," she said readily, "far otherwise. He is very clever, I think, and he works very hard."

The old man nodded. "Ask him," he said, with one of his odd smiles, "to explain to you the doctrine of the Trinity. Ask him, too, what priesthood has done for religion, save hamper and distort any purity or truth it once possessed."

"Do you think," Sheba asked timidly, "that our clergy, the clergy of the Reformed Church, are no better than the Roman Catholic priests?"

He laughed aloud, and his eyes flashed beneath their thick grey brows.

"Do I *believe*? Oh, child, child, if I could make you see for one moment the mass of lies, follies and superstitions that embroider the priestly garment, whether white, or violet, or black; whether the bishop's snowy surplice, or the cardinal's scarlet robe! What is underneath? Man—a man, mortal, erring, sinful as any other. What has sanctified him? why is he holy, and all the rest of mankind vile? Because another anointed official has laid hands on him! Five hundred years ago the world believed that the pillars of Hercules marked the western boundaries of the earth. There are antiquities of doctrine and faith just as absurd, for which so-called holy men fight tooth and nail to this very day. They would, if they *could*, govern the whole human race by the rigid letter of ecclesiastical law. Fortunately they cannot. Their day has gone by. The cry of the age is progress—and progress no longer means submissive acquiescence in what has been laid down dogmatically in bygone years of superstition. The mind of man is struggling out of swaddling bands, and demands to walk alone on a path of knowledge commensurate with its wants. The voice of the pulpit alone holds it back, crying, 'Refrain, oh, impious one! Question not, seek not, doubt not. Thus far and no farther shall inquiry go!'. . . . The babe is fed on milk, the child on faith; but shall milk and faith diet the body and the mind of man? True, there may be things which that mind and soul never shall know, but there is no reason why they should not *seek* to know. Yet the very class who should be able to instruct the earnest and the investigating, is the class who have ever striven to keep them in dire ignorance, simply to maintain a superiority on their own side. The world was created in six days, that is what every child is told, and generally believes. The fact of eating an apple was the introduction of sin, and the curse of the human race. The God of Heaven fought in a personal, bloodthirsty manner with the armies of men, and gloried in the tortures of the very beings He had created. The waters of a mighty sea rolled back in order to annihilate a foe whose hearts

this same God expressly states *he* had purposely hardened. The sun stood still to please a Jewish priest, and give time for inordinate slaughter, and went back on a dial to establish the faith of a sick king. One inspired ruler writes his own death; and a perpetually quoted prophet speaks with a personal knowledge of events that cover a period of two hundred or three hundred years. Some books of prophecy are in fact the work of several writers, *not* of one. But the clergy, who are the professed students of the Bible, were the last to discover or acknowledge that. Heaven knows whom they were afraid of. Their own heads and chiefs most probably, who hold the prospects of advancement and the pomposity of office. Nothing must be altered, all must continue on the old safe cut-and-dry lines; no controversy, no discussion, no argument; blind belief and blinder submission; God, so it seems to me, being represented to men in *their* own image now, just as He was in the old ignorant days, when it is written, 'He talked, and walked, and fought, and commanded, and punished, and avenged.' He loved and hated; was jealous and angry, and to all intents and purposes was a being very like those who professed to have almost personal acquaintance with Him."

"If all you say is true," sighed Sheba miserably, "what *is* there to believe? It is hard to give up all faith in what one has learnt and accepted. In the light in which you look at the Bible and religion, nothing seems true or trustworthy."

"You could find plenty that is both," he said, "if you had waited to study it for yourself, not learnt to read it by man's literal interpretation. Hard—well, it is hard, and no doubt I seem to you as a devil tempting. That is why we will teach Paul nothing. He shall at least have no foolish fables clinging to memory, when he is old enough to choose for himself."

"I wish," said Sheba, "you knew Noel Hill. I wonder what he would say to your assertions."

"Bring him to me," said the old German with a gruff laugh. "I should like it. I have fought many a battle with priests of all persuasions. They always had to beat a retreat. Mostly they take shelter under the wing of faith. What can't be explained up to a certain point must be received in faith; the faith of a little child at his mother's knee who accepts 'Cerentola' and the 'Giant Killer' as real personages. Faith—Bah! Was there ever so heavy a stone rolled at the gate of inquiry? Faith! where would the world be now if science had only been content with faith? If Galileo had simply said, 'You must believe the earth goes round the sun because I—say so;' or Columbus, 'You must believe there is another continent, though I haven't found it;' or the discoverer of electric force, 'You must believe there is a mighty and wonderful current, which will bridge space and laugh at barriers of sea and land; which is light and heat, and life and death; but I can't *show* you its power, or its use.' The mind

of man is so constituted that it must be convinced of a thing before accepting it as truth ; but the mind of childhood is not so. Hence the reason why your clergy are so eager for the baptism of infants, the (to them) still more important rite of Confirmation, ere ever the young mind has really thought or considered the importance of what it professes. Once in the church, they say 'All is safe with your future' . . . There are people who believe that the mere fact of a child being baptized means its salvation. I suppose it has never occurred to them to wonder what has become of the souls of the unbaptized millions who lived before the rite was instituted ; but *nun da hört alles auf* ! a people who accept a service with the thirty-nine articles, the Athanasian creed, and the commination curses would accept anything ! *Wir lassen sie bleiben !* "

Sheba was silent and disturbed ; for some moments they walked on without speaking. Presently they came in sight of little Paul ; he was standing still, looking at something which he held in his hand. It was a butterfly.

"Look, Sheba," he cried, as the girl paused beside him—he had from the first decided that the surname of his governess was far too long for daily use—"I've found such a lovely butterfly !" He opened his hand. The insect lay there crushed and lifeless. His little face grew grave. "Oh !" he said sorrowfully, "where is it ? What has become of it ?"

"It is dead," said Sheba, "it was cruel of you to crush the poor thing in your little hot hand."

"Won't it fly again ?" he asked eagerly. "Won't it ever—ever fly again ? Is that why it's dead ?"

"Yes," said the girl gently.

"And where is what made it alive ?" he went on. "I haven't got that, have I ? There is only a little dust in my hand."

"That is so, *mein Liebling*," said the old German, "you have solved the secret of all ended life : a little dust, no more, no less ; just—a little dust."

The child let the dead insect fall from his hand. His eyes looked wistfully up to the two faces above him. "And then——" he said.

Sheba turned aside to hide the tears in her eyes. The old man looked troubled.

"Nay, ask no questions," he said at last. "What matters when all is over ? Sleep, rest, or work that still goes on. We shall know soon enough."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"WHAT LIFE MIGHT BE."

It is not to be supposed that such a mind and such teachings as those of Franz Müller could be without serious influence on such a nature as Sheba Ormatroyd's. She had been brought up to accept a narrow code of doctrine, restricted almost harshly from all inquiry or explanation, and until she knew Noel Hill the real truth or meaning of Christianity had been as much of a dead letter to her as it is, sad to say, to ninety-nine of every hundred children in Christian families. It is not their fault. What their parents were taught, they teach again, sect for sect, each upholding its own petty creed as superior to all others, and scarcely ever troubling to look below the surface of such pharisaical forms as family prayers and regular church-going. As for the clergy, what do they know, individually, of the souls that are their ostensible charge? What do they teach—or rather, what can they teach—beyond the stereotyped doctrines they, in their day, learned also from their parents' lips, and accepted in after life as infallible truth, to be disseminated and re-taught by themselves, with such additions or alterations as a little knowledge of Greek or Hebrew will permit? They preach of sowing the seed, but they seldom inquire what harvest their teaching has garnered. They visit their parish and discuss religious subjects, condescendingly or deferentially, according to the social state of the parishioners. They eat, drink, and are merry, and they keep a watchful eye on the loaves and fishes, yet all the while inveigh against the vanity of wordly pleasures, and the deceitfulness of riches. For a class of men who invariably marry rich wives, or wives with relatives possessed of interest in the matter of advowsons, this is somewhat inconsistent. They preach humility, yet who so bullies and works the poor curate as that same humility-preaching rector? They preach self-sacrifice, and point the moral by asking for large offertories for charities, to which they personally contribute prayers alone; or for church decoration and embellishment, which is a glorification of their own special edifice. "Deny yourself a few dinners, an extra carriage-horse, and provide altar cloths and put in a new painted window for *me*." This in plain words is the meaning of delicately-worded suggestions as to doing God honour and proving the reality of Christian professions.

Oh, for a fan to purge, and a whirlwind to sweep away the monstrous accumulation of hypocrisy and false teaching that shames the very name of Christianity. Oh, for voice bold enough, and heart brave enough, to speak out the truth, and nothing but the truth, in high places as in low; in the palaces of the great, as in the cottages of the poor. Truth that should echo in the drawing-rooms

of society's pampered herds as bravely as from the pulpit, which forms so safe a vantage ground. Strip off my lady's satin and pearls, and my lord's robes of state; the ball-room's dainty gossamer and fine broadcloth; divest my lord cardinal of his scarlet robes, and my lord archbishop of his lawn and lace, and cry aloud: Be men and women of one earnest, zealous faith—the faith that speaks a common humanity—a living, seeking, struggling soul, that no trappings can disguise, and no luxury can satisfy. Unite, and solve into one common large-hearted brotherhood, that seeks for each and all, the best and the truest. Be no longer blind and deaf to all belief, save the narrow special creed which accident has made your own. Preach that love is the fulfilling of the law and *practise* it individually; not in a selfish spasmodic fashion here and there, but as if it were a truism taken into *each* life however humble, or however great, and in each *faithfully* performed. Brief is the day of human life, and of the night that follows who shall speak with any certainty? Who, whether saint, or prophet, or martyr, has come back to tell us of the Great Beyond? To tell us with such absolute conviction that we can face death unflinchingly, saying: "*I know* and am not afraid."

Does any one pause in life's busy march, to ask themselves: "Who am I? Whence do I come? Whither am I going? I shall not always sleep and rise, eat and drink, dress and gossip, and slave for money, and weep over falsehood, and see the vanity of men's words, and of women's beauty, and the cruelty of death, and the sins and weariness of life; not always—not perhaps for long, and then——"

Ah, *then*—that one little word holds all the wonder that nothing satisfies. Neither church-going, nor district-visiting, nor early celebrations, nor the voice of many preachers; nay, sometimes not even the words of the Great Book itself, though in it there lies the grain of truth that men have heaped over with dust of doctrines, and well-nigh buried beneath mis-translations; that has been used as a licence from Heaven for all the malignity and fiendish brutality of persecution; that has served Jew and Gentile, priest and prophet, sceptic and saint, visionary and infidel, men of all creeds, and men of none; that, I say, has served each and all of these in turn, so wide is the margin of its teaching, so varied the utility of its contents.

Then—chill as the touch of death's angel, weighty as the stone at the sepulchre, that little word bars the way to promised realms of bliss and vague dreams of celestial glory. Then—rise up and array yourselves, oh, misspent hours and wasted days! oh, cold, hard words, that lie heavy as lead on many a loving heart, and chill many a tender memory. Petty actions; deeds that seemed pious and unselfish, but which we know now to have been vain-glorious and full of foolish pride! Rise up arrays of family quarrels, and cruel divisions; bigoted faiths that in the name of

a God of mercy showed neither mercy nor toleration to any dissenting soul; harsh mandates that drove the erring and the weak to ruin or to death. Rise up, too, oh, half-uttered truths, more cruel than any lies; and you, oh sin best-loved of powers of evil and surest weapon in the fearful armoury of hell, the pride that apes humility. One and all your seeds are scattered, broadcast over an earth that was once as fair as we fain picture Heaven; and one and all, you have your root in every life that lives, and rule with iron sceptre the blurred distorted image that once bore its Creator's stamp of perfection.

To one and all the truth comes soon or late; are there few or many to whom it comes with a cry sad as the sigh from Calvary. "Ye might, but ye would not!" That is the secret of each heart; there lies the chance of better things breathed into the folded bud of each new life, to blossom beneath the sun of purity, or perish beneath the chill frosts of evil. "Ye might, but ye would not." Who that looks back on even a score of human years, but hears those words ring out the knell of many a sad mistake, many a heartless deed. Such a little thing could have prevented the mistake; would have altered the deed. Such a little thing. But it is too late now. The error has borne its fatal fruit, the cruel act has perchance rolled a gravestone of silence between sufferer and inflictor. For each comes but the unavailing plaint: "Ye might, and ye would not."

Life has its duties, and we may not shirk their obligations any more than we may recklessly cast aside that life itself, be it ever so burdensome.

Side by side with the days and the years march the opportunities of each for good or for evil. It is a solemn thought, but one too often lightly regarded. Science looks far into the future, it cannot stay to lift the beggar from his misery. Philosophy bends grey head and dim eyes over the labours of thought; it hears not the cry for bread at its door. Religion speaks vaguely of beatitude in a future state, of patience under trial in this; seldom does it go out of its priestly way to clothe the naked, and feed the hungry, or protect the orphan. It seems, indeed, as if each art and profession lived but for itself and its own petty triumphs, while all the great ills of life and all its mistakes and necessities are left unheeded, as they always have been left, by the great majority. Is it any wonder that selfishness takes deeper root, and evil flourishes rank and poisonous in congenial soil, despite a feeble remonstrance here and there? To our shame, be it said, despite also the advance of culture and religion. The problem of virtue lies at the root of all moral problems, and it concerns those who profess religious opinions just as much as those who do not. But "how to be virtuous?" asks man of his teachers. What answer do they make? The Church bids him love God, and live only for His service. Science and philosophy, worshipping their idol of "reason,"

say, "Virtue is the performance of such acts as shall benefit your fellow man." Rationalism teaches that "virtue is the avoidance of such things as are harmful, individually or collectively," so that a sin might be a virtue if the action of lying or stealing were beneficial, instead of the reverse. Virtue is unselfishness, says one creed, yet selfishness is in itself a law of individual life—the life that has to be fed, and clothed, and cared for, and whose needs are too imperative to be gainsayed. If we come to define conscious existence, we find selfishness its very essence; it is only harmful when carried to excess, and made the rule of each thought and action that fills the petty sphere of individual life.

Virtue, again, presented as a scientific theory, is only attainable by rising out of that same petty sphere of individual life, and surveying the whole race of mankind as a brotherhood and treating it as such. Yet if science only allows to that vast brotherhood its short span of human life, there is more of melancholy than of hope in the prospect. It needs a wide faith and a deep hope to look beyond, and yet again beyond, and yet trust for the ultimate happiness of the erring souls that emanate from one source of universal life, and yet have lost all likeness to that source, and almost all kinship to that spirit.

Virtue, or that semblance of goodness which we call virtue, is relative to the whole of the great human body, but it often fails to take root in the heart even though it sways the intellect. To do both, it must represent God's will to man's conscience, and impress his spiritual as well as his material condition. Then the importance of earth's "to-day" is no longer narrowed into mere material well-being, with nothing beyond but the grim gates of death.

It is of little use to preach virtue and never practise it, to warn and not assist, to entreat others to beware of offences, yet live a life pointing a very different moral, and causing either directly or indirectly those very offences to exist. It has been said, that if every man who draws the breath of life would only do a little good to each fellow creature with whom friendship or kinship unites him in a common band of associations, he would be also doing an inestimable good for the great mass of humanity, and conferring a far greater benefit on such humanity than it receives in the aggregate from some sacrifice or martyrdom that has been impulsive and irrational, even though it seems heroic. It doesn't seem a hard thing to do a *little* good in each life; something to help another life whose fellowship brightens the dull prose of existence; but it is *each* life, not one here and there that must do it, ere the benefit is felt or the effect acknowledged.

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Some such thoughts as these ran riot in the mind of Sheba Ormatroyd for many days after that long discussion with Müller;

all was chaos and disorder in her soul ; one faith had slipped away and there was no other to take its place. She dimly felt what life might be, and what religion might make of it, but she knew that it was, in reality, widely different. The helplessness and hopelessness of it all saddened and embittered her ; in no time of her life had she been in such terrible danger, and yet she was quite unconscious of the fact.

The old German himself never guessed what harm he had done ; with what a devastating blast his chill philosophies had blown over that untrained, yet fruitful mind-garden of the young girl for whom he had so kindly a friendship. She had asked, and he had answered. It did not occur to him to question results.

He had read so much, and studied so deeply, and thought so earnestly, that his mind was like a huge rough giant, towering over the feeble pigmies of most intellects with which he came in contact. To one who had made himself familiar from youth up with such works as those of Kant, Schopenhauer, Strauss, Ranke, Gervinus, Hegel, Mosheim ; the doctrines of Luther and Calvin ; the history of ancient and modern religions, with all their terrible array of dogmas, and their debasing cruelties and persecutions, it was no wonder that a child's faith in what he termed the "nursery stories of Christianity" seemed weak and foolish, and of no account.

Each mind has its own secret temple of worship, perhaps the old German philosopher had his, though he would not acknowledge it, and worshipped there at the shrine of reason, with complete satisfaction to himself. The name of Christianity signified nothing to him but a narrow, hard creed, whose professors were bitter foes to any variance of opinion, or any deep and persistent inquiry. He had heard wranglings innumerable over the Bible, and discussions on the Fall, the Atonement, the Incarnation and the Resurrection, till the very words had grown hateful and robbed of anything like sacred meaning. Priests were ready to fight tooth and nail over some petty formula that invested them with temporary importance, while on the threshold of the Church stood shivering souls hungering for some food that should satisfy, and some hope that should comfort.

Perhaps Müller had climbed so high that he looked down on all denominations as one and the same thing, and classed them together without troubling to search among the mass for any exception. His life had been a stormy one, and priesthood had ever been held up to him as a bugbear and a tyrant ; it had destroyed family peace, and thrust at him on all sides with the sharp sword of malignant persecution, and he at last had trampled it under foot with the scorn and pride of youth, crying aloud : "Of you, and of your God I will have nothing." His passionate love for music and his own splendid gifts had alone saved him from utter heartlessness and

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hardness, and there was in him a certain nobility of character that made his friendship a gift worth bestowing, and showed that even hostility and injustice had not quite warped his mind.

And it was in this man's path that fate had chosen to throw Sheba Ormatroyd at the most critical period of her life.

(To be continued.)

CALDERON.

By JOSEPH FORSTER.

SOME critics have compared Calderon to Shakespeare. The comparison is utterly preposterous. No two authors could differ more in method, substance and style. Shakespeare's men and women show us their inmost souls and hearts. Calderon's creations are scarcely men and women; they are beings moved by one passion, as a machine might be moved by one spring. Calderon incarnates an idea and calls it a man or woman; Shakespeare reduces and subordinates all to the individual mind and character of the person portrayed. In Calderon there is no gradual unfolding and development of character; no striking out new phases of thought and passion by the shock of circumstances. There are in Calderon's plays the jealous and implacable husband, the ardent lover, the determined villain; but they remain to the end of the fifth act exactly what they were in Scene I., Act I. They all wear their hearts on their sleeves. They are distinctly lay figures, dressed and posed and made to articulate from the teeth words of love or hate; but no thought animates their brains, no real blood circulates in their hearts. All the action is arranged by a consummate stage manager, but there is no character, no humour, no mixed passions, no awful and tremendous struggle between the good and bad angels in man and woman; all is mechanical and proceeds from the head alone; the heart has no part in it.

Most of Calderon's plays illustrate some proverb. For instance: "Life is a Dream;" "In this Life all is True and all is False;" "Beware of Still Water;" "Jealousy the Worst of Monsters;" "All is not so Bad as it Appears;" "A House with Two Doors is Difficult to Guard."

Calderon was half a preacher and half a dramatist, and there was not enough of him to be great in both parts.

Then a Spaniard's religion had nothing to do with the conscience and the heart. No. It consisted, in Calderon's time, in slavish devotion to the Holy Inquisition and to the Catholic dogmas and ceremonies. Take to illustrate this important point the hero of the "Devotion to the Cross." Ennio boasts that:

Horrid crimes, theft, murder, sacrilege,
Treason and perfidy—these are my boast
And glory!

Then this truculent gentleman regales us with an account of some of the enormities he has committed, including the murder of an old hidalgo and the abduction of his daughter, stabbing another hidalgo and carrying off his wife. After these little escapades he sought refuge in a convent, and seduced a nun. This outrage on the Holy Catholic religion awakened his slumbering conscience, and taught him for the first time that he was a scoundrel. His soul is saved through his abject terror of the power of the offended Church. Conscience does not touch him.

In another piece, by Tirso de Molina, a hermit whose life has been most virtuous has been the victim of religious doubt. This damns him. His soul is sunk into the abyss, while a bandit, who perishes on the scaffold for hideous crimes, dies penitent and is saved!

Spain at that time was not distinguished by lofty morality.

Don Pedro Calderon de la Barca was born at Madrid at the commencement of the year 1600. He was baptized on the 14th February, 1600. His family, on both sides, were of noble blood. When nine years of age he was placed in the Royal College at Madrid, under the care of the Jesuits. He soon surpassed all his fellow-students. The fame of Lope de Vega was then at its height, and aroused the emulation of the boy. His first comedy, fortunately lost, was written before he was fourteen.

Calderon afterwards studied at the celebrated university of Salamanca, where he soon became the pride of the college. The drama still fascinated him, and before leaving Salamanca he enjoyed the delight of seeing some of his plays acted. He returned to Madrid, and learned there, from the plays of Lope de Vega, the art of constructing a complicated plot of intrigue.

At the age of twenty-five he joined the army, and went to Flanders and Milan. During these ten years of travel and adventure he collected materials for his future works.

In 1636 Calderon returned to Madrid, at the command of Philip IV., who made him superintendent of the dramatic festivities of the court. Lope de Vega had then been dead one year. Four years afterwards the Chevaliers of the Four Orders were ordered to join the army in Catalonia. The king, who wanted a comedy, intimated to Calderon that he would accept a comedy as a substitute for his military services. The poet preferred to write and fight; he dashed off a play and then joined the army.

At the conclusion of the campaign he returned to court, and was received with much favour. In 1651 Calderon took religious orders, but did not relinquish the theatre. In 1663 he joined the congregation of St. Peter, composed exclusively of priests born at Madrid, and was soon elevated to the post of chaplain of the congregation. He died at the age of 81, on the 26th May, 1681.

Although for fertility Calderon could not compare with Lope de Vega, he left the world one hundred and twenty comedias of three

acts each, one hundred auto-sacramentales, two hundred loas (a kind of prologue), one hundred interludes, besides an indefinite number of poems, songs and romances.

"The Physician of His Own Honor" is one of the most remarkable and characteristic of Calderon's tragic plays. I will therefore introduce a sketch of it. It is intense, gloomy, and the situations are arranged with great art.

Don Enrique, the prince, is thrown from his horse and remains insensible. The king exhibits a cool indifference to his brother's fate, and leaves him. The injured Enrique is carried into the castle of Don Gutierre, when Doña Mencía comes to attend him. To her horror she recognizes the prince who had formerly made love to her, and whom she still loves. The prince does not know that she is the wife of Don Gutierre. When he recovers consciousness he recognizes Doña Mencía, and a stilted love scene occurs. The prince, on learning that the lady is married, exclaims :

Troy burns ; and the Æneas of my heart
Must from the flames be rescued.

The lady rises to the occasion and does justice to her chaste reserve in the following language :

It was a mountain of snow conquered by the flowers,
Squadrons armed by time.

The husband, Don Gutierre, enters to pay his respects to the prince. The latter calls for his horse. Don Gutierre urges him to stay, but he protests that he is anxious to reach Seville. He tells Gutierre that a friend had betrayed him, by assisting another to gain the heart of the woman he loved.

Doña Mencía then humbly suggests that the prince should not condemn his friend unheard ; that perhaps all could be satisfactorily explained. He says he will profit by her advice, and leaves them.

Gutierre then asks his wife's permission to go to Seville to see the king. Mencía affects to be jealous of a certain Leonora, but finally gives her permission. After his departure Mencía tells her maid that she was forced into her marriage with Don Gutierre, and that the prince loves her more than ever, but that she relies on her sense of honour.

In the next scene Leonora begs for justice of the king against Don Gutierre, who refused to marry her according to promise.

Don Gutierre arrives, and is questioned by the king. He answers that he would have married the lady, but had seen a man descending from her balcony, and for that reason refused. Then Don Arias avows that he descended from the balcony after visiting another lady residing in the same house. This gentleman also offers to defend Leonora's honour with his sword.

Don Gutierre attempts to draw. The king, indignant, orders the arrest of both.

In the second act, Prince Enrique gains admission to the house of Doña Mencía, whose husband is under arrest.

The lovers are together when the husband, who has been released on parole, arrives to surprise them. The prince is hidden in her bedroom. Gutierre is prodigal with his expressions of love. Mencía talks with him calmly, and leaves him to see about his supper. She soon returns with every mark of terror in her face and voice, and tells Gutierre that a man is concealed in her chamber. The furious husband draws his sword; Doña Mencía snatches up a light and offers to conduct him, but she pretends to stumble, and drops the light, which is extinguished. In the darkness and confusion the prince escapes. Gutierre enters Doña Mencía's room to search for the intruder. He returns with the prince's dagger, which he found there, under his cloak. His suspicions are vague, and he is silent on them. He tells his wife that her fears were baseless; no man could have been there. His manner is grim, but very polite. He bids her farewell, and on opening his cloak to embrace her, she discovers Enrique's dagger pointed at her. She shrieks and exclaims:

MENCIA. Hold, señor! Your dagger pointed at me! I have never wronged you! I—

DON GUTIERRE. What troubles my beloved wife?

MENCIA. Why—ah! seeing you thus I fancied myself already bathed in my own blood. That dagger . . .

DON GUT. When seeking your imaginary intruder I drew my dagger to punish him.

MENCIA. I have never wronged you.

DON GUT. Sweet wife, your defence is most superfluous.

MENCIA. Ah! it is when you are absent from me that my sadness so confuses my brain as to make fears out of shadows.

DON GUT. Courage! . . . If it is possible, I will come to-morrow night. Till then, God bless you.

MENCIA. God bless you! (*Exit.*)

DON GUT. (*alone*). Oh, Honor! you and I have a fearful account to settle when alone!

Gutierre is set at liberty. He sees the prince again, and notices that his sword resembles the dagger he found in his wife's chamber. This arouses his suspicions, which he resolves to clear up. The next scene is at Don Gutierre's. Doña Mencía is sleeping in a chair. Don Gutierre arrives. He is delighted at finding her alone and asleep. Yet, on deeper thought, she being alone in her chamber, may be waiting for some one for whom her maid is perhaps on the watch. He extinguishes the light and awakens her. The following dialogue takes place in whispers:

MENCIA. O, God! what is this?

GUTIERRE. Hush, speak softly.

MENCIA. Who art thou?

GUTIERRE. Knowest thou me not?

MENCIA. Ah, yes! There is but one who dares to be so bold.

GUTIERRE (*aside*). She recognizes me. (*Aloud*) Mencía, wonder not that love should be so bold.

MENCIA. Love will not pardon the crime your highness now commits.
 GUTIERRE (*aside*). *Your highness!* Then she knows me not! She speaks not to me! O God! what have I heard! What a chaos of fresh doubts! O misery! O heavy day!
 MENCIA. Wilt thou a second time thus risk my life? Think'st thou that every night
 GUTIERRE (*aside*). O death!
 MENCIA. That every night thou canst hide here?
 GUTIERRE (*aside*). O Heavens!
 MENCIA. That every night the light can be extinguished?
 GUTIERRE (*aside*). Extinguish life!
 MENCIA. And thou escape Don Gutierre?
 GUTIERRE. O heavy day!

The vengeance of Don Gutierre is dark, silent and deadly. He accumulates fresh proofs of the prince's identity, and intercepts a letter to his wife, which convinces him that although she has been faithful to him in deed, her heart is Don Enrique's. He detects her writing a letter, and snatches it from her. She faints, and on recovering finds the following letter from her husband :

Love adores thee, but Honour condemns thee; the one dooms thee to death, the other warns thee of it. Thou hast only two hours to live. Thou art a Christian; save thy soul: as for thy life, thou canst not save it.

Her terror, on receiving this, is extreme. She exclaims :

Jacinta! O God, what is this? No one replies. . . . My horror increases. . . . The servants are absent. . . . The doors all fastened! O God, I am alone! alone! The windows barred the doors bolted no escape. . . . Death in all its horrors approaches me. . . .

She flies from her chamber. Don Gutierre returns with a surgeon, whom he has forced to accompany him with eyes bandaged.

Don Gutierre to the Surgeon.

You must enter that chamber. This dagger pierces your heart if you do not faithfully obey all my commands. Open that door, and say what you see there?

SURGEON. An image of death; a corpse stretched on a bed. Two torches burn at each side, and a crucifix is placed before it. I know not who it may be, as a veil covers the countenance.

GUTIERRE. 'Tis well.
 This living corpse you must put to death.

SURGEON. What are your terrible commands?

GUTIERRE. That you bleed her to death. That you quit her not until she expires. No word! It is useless to implore my pity. It is dead!

The surgeon obeys; but on leaving the house blindfolded, he marks the door with his finger, red with blood, to enable him to know the house again. He informs the king of all, who accompanies him to Gutierre's, and orders Don Gutierre to marry Leonora.

KING. Give then thy hand to Leonora; well she merits it.

GUTIERRE. I give it freely, if Leonora dare accept it bathed in blood.

LEONORA. I marvel not, nor fear.

GUTIERRE. 'Tis well, but I
Have been my honor's own physician, nor
Have yet forgot the science.

LEONORA. Keep it then
To end my life, if it be bad.

GUTIERRE. Alone on this condition I now yield my hand.

Evidently Gutierre is looked upon as a hero by the author and the audience. I may, perhaps, be allowed to express a hope that Leonora behaved nicely.

The next play of Calderon's about which I will say a few words is the "Wonderful Magician," which has been compared to Goethe's "Faust." The scene of the piece opens near Antioch, where, "with glorious festival and song" a temple is being consecrated to Jupiter. Cyprian, a young student, has withdrawn from the noise of the town to devote himself to quiet study. A slight noise disturbs him, and the Dæmon appears, dressed as a cavalier. They commence to argue: Cyprian points out the errors of polytheism, the Dæmon opposing him. We learn that Cyprian has been converted to monotheism, a step in the direction of Christianity; and this conversion is feebly combated by the Dæmon.

Cyprian is left alone in his study, but is soon interrupted by the quarrel of his two friends, Lelio and Floro, who are both in love with Justina, a recent convert to Christianity. Cyprian makes peace, and agrees to visit the lady in order to learn whom she prefers. On seeing Justina, Cyprian loves her. She rejects his love as she had that of Lelio and Floro. This coldness so enrages him that he exclaims:

So beautiful she was—and I,
Between my love and jealousy,
Am so convulsed with hope and fear,
Unworthy as it may appear—
So bitter is the life I live
That, hear me, Hell!

I now would give
To thy most detested spirit
My soul for ever to inherit,
To suffer punishment and pine
So this woman may be mine.

Hear'st thou, Hell!

Dost thou reject it. My soul is offered.

DEMON (unseen) I accept it.

Tempest, with thunder and lightning. The storm rages—a ship goes down at sea; and the DEMON enters as a shipwrecked passenger.

DEMON (aside) It was essential to my purposes
To make a tumult on the supphire ocean,
That in this unknown form
I might at length
Wipe out the blot of the discomfiture
I sustained upon the mountain, and assail
With a new war the soul of Cyprian,
Forging the instruments of his destruction
Even from his love and from his wisdom.

Cyprian condoles with the stranger and offers him hospitality.

Cyprian describes, in very flowery language, the charms of Justina, and declares that he is so enamoured of her as to have forsaken philosophy, and to be ready to give up his soul for her possession. The Dæmon accepts the offer, splits open a rock, and shows Justina reclining and asleep. Cyprian rushes towards her, but the rock closes again, and the Dæmon demands that the contract shall be signed with Cyprian's blood. This is done, and the Dæmon agrees to instruct him in magic, by which, at the end of a year, he will be able to possess Justina.

After the year's probation is passed, Cyprian is eager for his reward. The Dæmon calls on the spirits of hell to call up impure thoughts in Justina's mind, so that she may incline her ear to Cyprian.

The following scene shows the agitation of the tempted girl. She is alone in her chamber :

JUSTINA. Thou, melancholy ! which in me
Fluttering risest, sad and sweet,
When surrender'd I to thee,—
Cease my languid heart to treat
With such hateful tyranny !
Tell me, what tumultuous power
Wildly doth my being move—
Kindling, lulling more and more ?
And this glow that thrills my heart ?
Say, what causest now the smart
Of this anguish ?

CHORUS. Love—O, Love !

JUSTINA. 'Tis yon love-lorn nightingale
That gives me the reply,
Telling ever his soft tale
To the listeners in the vale,
Of passion and of constancy ;
Mourning still his gentle heat
In melody—Ah, me, how sweet,
Whilst his mate, who, rapt and fond,
Listening sits a bough beyond,
Makes divine response meet.
Cease, O cease, sweet Philomel !
That not by so deep a charm
Thoughts within my soul may swell,
Of what a manly heart would tell !
No, it was yon vine-tree's song
That, still longing, seeks and flies,
Till it doth, the flowers among,
All the grass beloved throng,
And the green trunk vanquish'd lies.
Vine, no more with green embraces
Make me think on what thou lovest ;
For thy tendril interlaces
But to teach, I fear, thou sophist !
Arms will twine too, nor dissever ;
And, if not the tender vine
That still tries with fond endeavour
With the elm to intertwine,
'Tis yon bright sunflower that, ever
Charmed by the sun's decline,
Wanders after every glimmer
Of his countenance divine.

Sun-enamoured flow'r! obscure
 From mine eyes those beams that bend it;
 Dost thou, insatiate, lure,
 Cheek to cheek, thy paramour?
 Ever-moving, light-enchanted;
 Hide, O flower, the amorous glowing
 Of thy beauty,—tranquil foe!
 To my treacherous heart avowing,
 If such tears from leaves are flowing,
 How from eyes thy tears would flow!
 Loose, O vine, thy wreathed bower!
 Silence, songster of the grove!
 Rest, thou light, inconstant flower!
 Or tell me the poisonous power
 Of your magic.

CHORUS. Love—O, Love!

JUSTINA. Love! Ah! when did I respect it?

Or, thou false one! homage plan?

Ever have I not neglected,

With disdain and scorn rejected

Lelius, Florus, Cyprian?

(*Pauses at the name of Cyprian and seems troubled.*)

Lelio did not I disband,

And refuse young Florus' hand?

Cyprian treated with such scorn,

That, despairing and forlorn,

He for ever disappears?

But alas! I deem that now

Is the occasion for these tears:

Venture boldly to avow

What inspires me with those fears,

Since to mine own soul apart

I pronounced that, in that hour,

Cyprian did for ever part,—

Feel I (woe is me!) a power

Raging in my burning heart.

Ah, it must be pity when

Such a man, so high renowned,

By the whole world's voices crown'd,

Noblest of all noblemen,

From my heartless scorn hath drowned

In oblivion his great mind.

But, we're in compassion blind,

I the like had felt towards

Lelius' or young Florus' mind,

Since in bonds both are confined,

For my sake, by tyrant guards.

Then, ye wandering fancies, cease!

Enough, without this subtlety,

'Tis that pity to increase,

Nor my soul to love compel;

For I know not, woe is me!

Where to find him now, should I

Through the wide world to him fly.

(*THE DÆMON enters.*)

DÆMON. Come, oh come, and I will tell!

JUSTINA. What art thou, who thus athwart

This my chamber find'st the way,

When no bars asunder part?

Say if you a phantom art,

Formed by terror and dismay?

DÆMON. No; but one called by the thought

That now rules, with tyrant away,

O'er thy fluttering heart—a man

Whom compassion hither brought,
That he might point out the way
Whither fled thy Cyprian.

JUSTINA. And thou shalt fail.
This storm which afflicts my frenzied soul
May imagination form
To its own wish; but ne'er shall warm
Reason to its mad control.

DÆMON. If thou hast the thought permitted,
Half the sin is almost done!
Wilt thou, since 'tis half committed,
Linger ere the joy be won?

JUSTINA. In our power abides not thought
(Thought, alas! how vain to fly),
But the deed is, and 'tis one
That we sin in mind have sought,
And another to have done:
I'll not move my foot to try.

DÆMON. If a mortal power assail
Justina with all its might,
Say, will not the victory fail
When thy wish will not avail,
But inclines thee in despite?

JUSTINA. By opposing to thee now
My free will and liberty.

DÆMON. To my power they soon shall bow.
Come, 'tis bliss that thou wilt prove.

JUSTINA. Dearly would I gain it so.

DÆMON. It is peace, and calm, and love.

(*Draws, but cannot move her.*)

JUSTINA. It is misery, death, despair!

DÆMON. Heavenly joy I offer thee.

JUSTINA. 'Tis bitter woe!

DÆMON. Lost and shamed, forsaken one!
Who in thy defence shall dare?

JUSTINA. My defence is God alone.

DÆMON. Virgin, virgin, thou hast won!

As the foiled Dæmon is unable to give Cyprian the real Justina, he deceives him by giving him a false one.

A figure, wrapped in a cloak, appears, and beckons to Cyprian to follow. He enters on the scene with, he believes, the beloved Justina in his arms. Transported with joy, he removes the veil from her face, and discovers a skull; from this hideous object proceeds these words:

Such are the glories of this world.

Cyprian, mad with disappointment, calls upon the Dæmon to fulfil his promise. He confesses that he cannot force Justina, as she is under the protection of a superior power! Cyprian asks what this power is. The Dæmon at last admits that it is the God of the Christians. Cyprian avows his belief in that power. The Dæmon is furious, and demands Cyprian's soul. He contends that the Dæmon has not fulfilled his contract. Words run high: Cyprian draws his sword and stabs the Dæmon; of course with no effect. Then the Dæmon tries to drag him away; but Cyprian, like Justina, calls on God for help, and the baffled Dæmon flies.

The Dæmon has a very bad time of it in this play. Cyprian and Justina are burned as heretics at Antioch, martyrs to the Christian faith.

The play closes with the last appearance of the unfortunate Dæmon riding through the air on a fiery serpent. He addresses the spectators, and tells them that God has compelled him to declare the innocence of Justina, and the freedom of Cyprian from his rash engagement: both now repose in Heaven. . We must admit that the Dæmon is not amusing; but let us hope, with Burns, that there is hope of his amendment, especially as he has found his wickedness such a miserable failure.

PRINCESS DORMANOFF.

By JOSEPHINE ERROL,

AUTHOR OF "NINE MERRY MAIDENS," "BRANDON'S ENGAGEMENT," "THINE ALONE."

CHAPTER I.

AS Gilbert Lovelace sat at breakfast one chill February morning, trifling with a *foie gras* and sipping his chocolate, he took up his mother's letter again, and perused it slowly. It did not contain much news; only urged him to come and see her and his father as soon as he possibly could; inquired if he had yet heard to which embassy he was likely to be attached; and concluded by telling him that the quaint Valley House, the nearest residence to their own, being only a mile distant, was let at last to a Russian princess, some of whose people had already arrived, and were engaged in beautifying and decorating it for her occupation.

"Wonder who she is?" he murmured. "Russian is only another name for Nihilist, and Europe is pretty well honeycombed with secret societies. Perhaps she is an emissary from one of them, bent upon a mission that will bring terrorism and assassination into our quiet corner of England." And then he laughed at his own fancies; for what should take a woman of that type to quiet Derlock, a remote village, little more than a hamlet, in South Devon, with the cottages sprinkled here and there in the valley and on the hill-sides sparsely, like plums in a schoolboy's pudding, and boasting only three gentlemen's residences?

So, dismissing the subject from his mind, he took up a morning paper and was soon deep in politics, and had forgotten all about the Russian princess and her old house in the Devonshire valley by the time he strolled out to his club.

A fortnight later, in response to a summons from his father, he was speeding in a hansom to Paddington, *en route* for Derlock, and arrived at the station with very little time to spare; for when his portmanteau was stored up aloft on the rack, his bear-rug adjusted over his knees, and half-a-dozen papers strewn on the seat beside him, there was just one minute to the starting-time. He had the compartment to himself, and was congratulating himself on that fact, when just as the guard signalled the engine-driver that all was right, the door of the carriage was thrown open, and a lady entered quickly, yet not hurriedly, and with a grace of movement that nothing it seemed would disturb or destroy, and

after her leapt a huge black-and-grey hound, while the door was slammed by a dark, strange-looking man, of whom Lovelace caught only a fleeting glimpse, for the next moment the train glided out of the station, and they were launched on their journey southwards.

He naturally glanced with some curiosity at his companion. She had seated herself in the far corner of the carriage, the dog sitting up gravely beside her, and when he looked, was in the act of picking up a splendid rug, composed of some rare birds' feathers on cloth, to wrap around her, though from her ankles to her dimpled chin she was wrapped in fur, and a small fur cap rested on her jet-black hair somewhat jauntily.

She caught him in the act of looking at her, and leaning forward, said in a singularly clear, sweet tone, though with a decided foreign accent: "I hope you do not object to my dog being in the carriage."

"Not at all," Lovelace assured her eagerly. "I am very fond of dogs myself, often travelling with a brace of spaniels."

"Ah, but Ivan is such a great fellow," stroking his massive head with her daintily gloved hand, "he takes up so much room. There was no time, however, to put him elsewhere, and even had there been, I should be loth to part with him even for a time." And she drew the fierce-looking head down to her shoulder and caressed it tenderly.

"I should think so," rejoined the young man. "One is never quite sure of finding one's dog safe in the box at the end of the journey, and I can well understand your prizing such a splendid animal. I have never seen one like him. What is he?"

"A Russian wolf-hound."

"I have seen some dogs in this country said to be of that breed, but they were neither so large nor so handsome."

"No. Ivan comes of a race that my people have prided themselves on for over a hundred years. A finer specimen could not be found if Russia were searched from Varungar to the Caucasus."

"I can quite believe it. Is he friendly to strangers?" inquired the young man, drawing nearer.

"Yes; if I tell him to be so." And murmuring a few words in some outlandish tongue, she made the great beast stretch out his paw and lay it in Gilbert's hand.

"How do you do?" laughed Lovelace, shaking the huge paw. "Glad to make your acquaintance, for you are a splendid fellow. But I don't think you return the compliment." And indeed the dog was looking from him to his mistress with a glance of almost human intelligence, as though asking if it were her pleasure that he should sit there and allow a stranger to take liberties with him, or whether he should fly at him, as he had often done at the great grey wolves in his own country, and rend and tear and destroy?

"Ivan," she began, again whispering in his ear those strange words, that were guttural when uttered even by her clear voice, and smiling; and Gilbert thought she was just the loveliest creature he had ever seen when that smile broke like sunlight over her face.

She was a regally beautiful woman; tall, and as far as he could judge, finely made, her head well set on her throat, her shoulders sloping and graceful. Her skin was pale and clear, and wonderfully fair for a dark woman—for of course he decided in his own mind that she was dark, having black hair, and straight black brows and thick jetty lashes that shaded the loveliest pair of blue eyes he had ever seen; blue as deep as his own, which he inherited from his Irish mother, the rare Celtic orbs that are always so beautiful. Her features were straight, the whole type of her face aristocratic, and the dimple in her chin made the observer forget that it was a trifle too determined and prominent and indicative of an indomitable will that nothing could break or destroy.

"It is a long journey into this Devonshire," remarked the lady, when the short winter's day was rapidly merging into night, as she drew her furs closer round her and glanced out at the snow-covered country, with a little involuntary shiver.

"Devonshire," he repeated. "Are you going there?"

"Yes."

"Then you have three hours' more travelling before you," exclaimed Lovelace, delighted at the prospect of being in her society for that time.

"Indeed! Do you know this route well?" she asked, playing with the dog's ears.

"Yes; very well. My father's place is at Derlock."

"Really! Then we shall be neighbours," she said, suddenly lifting her beautiful eyes and giving him a long glance.

"Neighbours! How? Why?" he inquired eagerly.

"I have taken a house near there."

"Is it possible? Can it be you that have taken the Valley House?"

"I believe that is its name," she rejoined indifferently; "but I know very little about it. Paulo has managed all matters as usual for me."

"You will find it rather dull," he remarked after a pause, marvelling what could take a woman of the brilliant type of his companion to such a remote, quiet little place as Derlock. "There is only one other decent house in the place, besides my father's and yours."

"And to whom does that belong?"

"To Doctor Wilford."

"Ah! Is he married?"

"No; single. His two sisters keep house for him."

"And are they young and pleasant?"

"Ella is just eighteen, rather pretty in a countrified style. Miss Wilford is over thirty, and is—ah! well, in fact a ——"

"Sort of dragon," put in the Russian archly, with a smile sweet enough to disarm even that monster.

"She is decidedly acidulated," laughed Lovelace.

"Then I shall avoid the doctor's house," remarked the lady.

"You won't have much difficulty in doing that," replied the young man, "as it is two miles from yours. The Manor—that is my father's place, you know—is a mile distant, lying between the two others, and if you want any more society, other than that of the country-folk, you will have to go ten miles to get it."

"How delightful!" she exclaimed with animation. "I shall enjoy the change and thorough quiet."

"Don't you think it may pall and grow monotonous after a time?"

"I think not. And you see, I must keep quiet and nurse myself through this winter."

"Why?" he inquired anxiously, scanning the beautiful face that showed every sign of perfect and splendid health.

"My lungs are weak," touching her breast; "the rigours of Russian winters have tried them terribly, and my physician recommends my passing the rest of the winter in South Devon."

"I see," he rejoined.

"Is it really warm there?"

"Yes, and Derlock is a sheltered cosy little spot."

"I am so glad you speak well of it," she remarked, as though much pleased. "Of course you know it so well. I suppose you have spent all your life there?"

He did not notice how eagerly and keenly the beautiful eyes searched his face as she asked the question.

"Not more than half. Before my father became an invalid we had a house in town, where we used to spend a portion of every year. Then I went to Eton and afterwards to Oxford, and have had chambers in Piccadilly for the last year," he explained, and then gradually she drew him on to tell her everything about his life and prospects.

The time passed so rapidly and pleasantly that he was astonished when the train slackened speed to hear the porters calling out the name of the station at which they had to alight for Derlock.

"You haven't told me your name?" she said with one of her brilliant smiles, as she rose and tossed aside the feather rug.

"Gilbert Lovelace; and yours? May I not know it?"

"I am Petrovna Dormanoff," she replied, giving him her hand to assist her from the carriage.

An elderly woman hurried down the platform to her as she alighted, and two menservants appeared, and when the luggage had been collected, Gilbert escorted her to the carriage that was waiting, and stood bareheaded while she drove off, after bestowing

on him a winning smile and a wave of the hand. Then he mounted into the sober dog-cart sent for him, and taking the reins from the groom, let the grey have her head, and rattled away towards his home.

CHAPTER II.

DERLOCK MANOR HOUSE was a fine old red-brick building, of the Tudor fashion, many-windowed, turreted, with towers east and west, and had a commanding central porch, over which stood a clock tower. Round three sides of the house ran a broad marble terrace, with low open wall, and beyond lay the garden and park-like grounds and the great tree-covered hills.

It had been in the possession of the Lovelaces since the time of Elizabeth, and they were naturally proud of their old ancestral home and their stainless pedigree. Gilbert's father had been in the House of Commons, and gave promise of becoming a fine orator and a light in the political world, but ill-health cut short his career, and obliged him to retire to the seclusion and quiet of his lovely Devonshire home. Then it was that he turned his thoughts exclusively to the future of his only child, striving his hardest to instil his own ideas and ambitions into the young mind.

However, he found the task a difficult one, for Gilbert's tastes were not similar to his father's. He did not care for politics, had no wish to shine in the House, and would have preferred living the simple life of a country gentleman, passing his time in shooting, fishing, and hunting; still, he yielded to his father's wishes, went to Oxford, took an expensive suite of rooms in town, and waited till he should receive orders to proceed to some embassy abroad.

The young man chafed somewhat at being kept in London, hanging about doing little or nothing, and responded eagerly to his father's summons, thinking he would have some definite news to tell him, but he was only mysteriously reticent; told him something good was in store if he would only wait patiently, and that he might as well remain at the Manor for the present.

This he was nothing loath to do, for he was consumed with a burning desire to once more see the Russian princess. He had hinted a desire to call, but was met with a laughing refusal, and told her only chaperon was an old Polish woman, her foster nurse; so he had to trust to chance, and took to long walks through the valleys, and rides from east to west and north to south about Derlock and its vicinity. But for a fortnight he only saw her once, and then she was driving a pair of roans, and flashed by swiftly, he just catching a bewildering glimpse of her beautiful face, wreathed in smiles of recognition. A week later he met her on the beach at Mordoe, a tiny hamlet, some two or three miles further down the valley; met her walking alone, save for Ivan, who stalked majestically behind her.

"Ah, Mr. Lovelace, this is a pleasure," she exclaimed, as if delighted; her eyes shining, her lips smiling, as she stretched out her hand.

"The pleasure is mutual, princess," replied the young man, grasping her fingers warmly. "I thought we never should meet again."

"Ah, that was hardly possible."

"Would you permit me to call on you?" he asked.

"Better—not," she returned hesitatingly, a blush tinging the pure pallor of her cheeks. "When a woman is alone, as I am, she has to be so careful, or she becomes an object for pitiless tongues to canvass and traduce."

"There are so few people about here to criticize what you do."

"There is the doctor and his family," watching him closely through her thick lashes.

"Psha! Mere country bumpkins. You need not care what people of that sort think or say."

"Then—they have been talking of me?" she said, looking straight at him.

"Princess, what makes you think so?" he replied in some confusion.

"You have been there, have you not?" laying her hand gently on his arm, at which an electric shock seemed to run through him.

"Yes, I have been there," he acknowledged somewhat huskily.

"And they talked of me?"

"Yes."

"What did they say?"

"Oh, nothing."

"I know what that means. They abused me without limit and without reason, and ——"

"I should not allow any one to abuse you when I was present," he said decidedly, looking at her with admiring eyes.

"Ah, have I a partisan, a friend in you?" she asked softly.

"Yes, if you will permit me that privilege?" he returned eagerly.

"It would be a great happiness to me to have a friend, and yet —and yet ——"

"Yet what?"

"Friendship between man and woman seldom answers one's hopes and expectations. One must always suffer and perchance weep."

"I am quite willing to run that risk," he cried.

"Then be my friend," she responded gently, putting her hand in his.

"Thanks," he murmured, as he pressed it tenderly, almost overcome by the flattering condescension of this regal and beautiful woman who exercised such a strange fascination over him.

"Now, tell me what you have been doing?" she said, as they

paced slowly side by side along the pebbly beach, watching the great white-crested waves rush in with a dash, leaving a fringe of frothy foam on the strand, and the gulls riding on their crests, and the sand-pipers flitting and swooping by. "Since we last met many things must have happened."

"Nothing of moment," he replied. "This is a quiet, humdrum spot, and is never convulsed nor wakened up by any fearful tragedy or startling event."

"I can believe that," she agreed, her haughty mouth curving into a little sneer; "but have you no news from other parts?"

"None. Absolutely none."

"Nothing fresh about the diplomatic career you told me you would soon be launched on?"

"Nothing at present."

"Still you may hear any day that you are attached to some embassy," she continued, with curious insistence.

"Of course," he assented. "Every morning as I see father perusing the pile of letters on his plate, I expect to hear that I am to set off at once for Kamtschatka, Nova Scotia, or some such horrible hole."

"I hope you won't go quite so far," observed the princess, with one of those brilliant smiles that lit up and softened her haughty face so wonderfully.

"I hope so too."

"You don't seem to like the idea of going abroad much," she went on, watching him furtively as usual through the shelter of her lashes.

"No, I would much rather stay here," he replied pointedly, and she turned away her head as though to hide a blush, but in reality her face grew paler and an angry light gleamed in her eyes. However, the next moment she recovered herself, and went on chatting graciously.

"You are young, you have your life and the world before you. Who knows? Some day you may be a great man, and famous."

"I think not," he replied, with a light laugh. "I believe I am a thorough fool in all things diplomatic, and should get on much better as a country squire than as prime minister."

"You do not over-value your mental qualities."

"It would be difficult to do that," he admitted frankly, "for I know I have little or no talent for diplomacy and *finesse*."

"Talent, and taste for it, may come with practice."

"I hardly think so. I am sure, princess, you could surpass me in that way easily."

"Do you think so?" she queried, a strange eagerness in her tones.

"I am sure of it. I should not like to cross swords with you in that way."

"Really! Now do you know that I do not care for very clever

men? They seem to eclipse and overshadow we poor women. I like rather stupid ones."

"Then you ought to like me, princess," declared the young man boldly, and his companion laughed, though across her face swept a look of mingled anger and surprise.

However, Gilbert did not notice it, and they went on talking, and before they parted, in the gathering gloom of the winter's afternoon, he had obtained permission to call at the Valley House the next evening.

CHAPTER III.

HE never quite knew how he passed the early hours of the following day.

The hours seemed to drag along leaden-footed. He was restless, feverish, excited, and scarcely ate three mouthfuls of food at dinner, a proceeding which awakened his fond mother's maternal fears, and inquiries as to the cause of this want of appetite. Gilbert, however, parried her queries, and preserved a discreet silence anent Princess Dormanoff; for he was well aware his mother entertained a holy horror of all foreigners, looking upon them with suspicious eyes. At last, when dinner was over, and the invalid had retired to his room for the night, and Mrs. Lovelace had settled down comfortably to a game of cribbage with her companion, he was free, and throwing a coat over his dress suit and catching up a hat, he sped off at a great rate down the road leading to the Valley House. He was not long in traversing that mile, and his eager gaze scanned the place that held his divinity.

The garden was neglected, and showed that little or no effort had been made to put it straight. Within all was different, and signs of elegance and luxuriance met his gaze on every side as he followed the tall footman who ushered him into the drawing-room. It was vacant, and he had time to glance about it.

It was rich in ornaments and *bric-à-brac*. There were bronzes from Szafnagal, china from Odessa, marble from Finland, bearskins from the Arctic Seas, queer figures made in the forests of the north, and furs without end strewn over the floor and on the satin couches. He sank on to a couch and felt there were worse things on a chilly evening than lying back luxuriously on a bearskin; but just as he sank back he became conscious that a tall, black-robed figure was being reflected in the long mirrors that lined the walls from ceiling to floor, and starting up he saw the princess coming slowly towards him.

She wore a long trailing robe of dead-black silk, profusely trimmed with jet, which left her arms and throat bare, save for the strings of pearls twisted round them, and that were not whiter than the skin against which they rested. If she had appeared

beautiful before, how much more so did she now to the infatuated young man, with her magnificent hair uncovered and her eyes unshaded by hat or cap. Gilbert was absolutely dazzled by her loveliness, and as she came towards him smiling, with outstretched hands, his senses seemed to reel, and he felt for a moment that he was dreaming, and that this beautiful vision would fade from before his eyes.

She seated herself beside him and began telling him how pleased she was to see him.

"I thought you had changed your mind and did not mean to come."

"Why?" he inquired, striving to steady his brain, which still seemed in a state of chaotic disorder.

"You are half-an-hour late," glancing at a little gold clock on the mantel-shelf. "As a rule, *my* guests are punctual."

"Yes, I suppose so, when they are given the privilege of calling on you; but I really could not help myself to-night. My father, as you know, is an invalid, and he makes claims on my time and attention that I cannot ignore."

"Of course not," she assented gently, toying with a splendid ostrich-feather fan, mounted in ebony.

"He detained me to-night, but to-morrow, or the next time you permit me to call on you, I shall be punctual to the minute."

"On the score of that promise you are forgiven, and you shall come and see me whenever you like."

"Princess! do you really mean that?" he cried, almost wild with delight, for he was little more than a boy, only just twenty-two, and he was intoxicated by the subtle charm of the Russian beauty.

"Yes. I have so few friends, I shall be glad to add you to the number."

"And I shall be only too proud to be of them, though I feel you are wrong when you say they are few. I am sure I shall be only one in a multitude."

"It is you who are wrong," she replied softly, while a look of deep melancholy spread over her beautiful face. "I have had acquaintances by the score, but few friends. We Russians are so trammelled. We have to be careful even in the selection of our friends. We don't really know the true meaning of the word freedom."

"So I have heard," replied Gilbert, looking at her with interest. "I suppose we English understand it better than any other nation."

"I suppose so, unless it be the Americans."

"Ah, they are free, without any mistake," he laughed.

"I wish I could say the same of my unfortunate country people. But we are all slaves. Patriotism makes many of us so; fear some. There are such hideous possibilities for some of us;" and

for a moment her face grew very white, and her dilated eyes gazed straight before her, as though fascinated by some horror; but recovering herself she went on, "Englishwomen are so happy in being able to marry as they choose."

"And cannot Russians?" asked Gilbert impressively.

"Very few. We cannot follow the dictates of our hearts; we marry from policy, or passion, or convenience, seldom for love. Sometimes it is to save a father from the mines, sometimes a mother from a weary imprisonment, sometimes a brother from the assassin's knife."

"But you—you will not have to do that," exclaimed the infatuated young man, catching her hand between his in his eagerness.

"No," she replied, in slow sweet tones, letting her hand remain in his, and turning her magnificent eyes on him; "happily I am in England, and can follow the promptings of my own heart, however foolish they may be." And as she spoke these encouraging words Gilbert felt his hand gently pressed by hers.

"Princess," he cried, carried away by his feelings, and losing his head altogether, for was it not evident this peerless creature had a tenderness for him, "dare I, may I hope? May I speak, and tell you something of what is in my heart?"

"It is too soon to speak," she returned gently. "We hardly know anything of each other yet, but you may—hope."

"Thanks," he exclaimed, kissing her hands again and again, so deeply moved that he did not see the strange look of disgust and repugnance that overspread her fair face.

After that it was all over with Gilbert Lovelace. Day by day he grew more infatuated with Petrovna Dormanoff, more her adorer, more her slave. She was the star, and he was the poor moth striving to singe its frail wings. His heart was engaged to a certain extent, not quite so much, however, as he thought, but his vanity was deeply impressed and engaged, and he told himself over and over again that there was some fascination about him which she had discovered and fallen in love with.

He told himself this so often that at last one night he summoned courage and begged her to consent to become his wife, and somewhat to his astonishment she did consent. But at the same time she made conditions, against which he found it useless to protest.

Absolute secrecy was one. Not a creature was to be told of their engagement. There was to be no thought of marriage until he had been appointed *attaché*, and then the marriage was to take place quite privately, and they were to start for the continent directly afterwards. To all this the poor deluded youth agreed, for the very simple reason that he found it useless to object. His lovely and charming princess had a will ten times as strong and determined as his own, and as usual the victory went to the strong. Moreover, she kept him at a distance, cleverly, and in such a way that he

hardly noticed it. Yet had he not been so bewitched he must inevitably have noticed that he had few if any of the privileges of an affianced lover. He was never permitted to kiss anything save her hands, his head had never rested against that marble shoulder on which he longed to pillow it; his arm had never encircled that lithe waist in all their long interviews. He was fire, but she was ice, and somehow or other the ice never melted in the heat, retaining always its cool hardness. Even under his rhapsodies, under the torrent of his vows and protestations of undying love and adoration, she remained calmly unmoved. The beating of her heart did not quicken by a pulse, nor her eyelids droop, nor her hands quiver, and yet she managed by encouraging words and superb *finesse* to impress him with the idea that she was very fond of him; and his vanity made him fall into the trap baited with flattery.

So matters went on until April arrived with her robe of vernal green, jewelled with sweet wild blossoms, and Mr. and Mrs. Lovelace knew nothing of the entanglement into which their son had got himself, while he grew daily more restless, more anxious that his appointment should arrive.

It came at last, and to his delight he was ordered to start for St. Petersburg in less than a fortnight. Without loss of time he repaired to the Valley House, and found the princess in her drawing-room, pretending to be busy over a dainty piece of work, and he was so full of his news and his plans for the future that he did not notice how her eyes sparkled, nor mark the red hectic spot that glowed in either cheek, nor the state of suppressed excitement in which she was.

"We must arrange all our plans now," he said, seating himself beside her and taking her hand.

"Of course," she assented; and then they talked together for some two or three hours, and before he left her they had settled everything.

A week later Gilbert, after a tender adieu with Petrovna, at which he displayed quite as much emotion as would have been necessary was he leaving her for years instead of days, started for London, enriched by a heavy purse and his fond father and mother's blessings. The first thing he did when he arrived at his rooms in Piccadilly was to dismiss his manservant with a liberal *douceur*, and the old woman who acted as cook and housekeeper, and to engage a couple of new servants at enormous wages for the space of one week. This done he set about settling up all his affairs, went to the Foreign Office for his passport and the papers that were necessary, then returning to his rooms, sat waiting impatiently for the princess to arrive.

She had promised to come to his rooms, actually to his rooms, and then they were to be married early the next morning. He expected her at eleven, but time wore on and it was midnight, and

still she had not arrived. He was in a fever of impatience, could hardly contain or control his anxiety.

What could be the matter? Had an accident happened?

At last, just when he felt he could bear the tension and anxiety no longer, he heard the sound of wheels stopping before the house, and tearing down the stairs, he was just in time to see the princess alighting from a cab, followed by the old Pole, as the first rosy glow of light heralded the coming dawn in the eastern sky.

"Have you been anxious, *mon ami*?" she asked softly, giving him both her hands.

"Anxious! I have been nearly mad!" he cried, crushing her hands in his strong grasp till she nearly shrieked with pain. "What was it? Is anything wrong?"

"Nothing, *cher* Gilbert. The train was detained, that was all."

"All! And I have been nearly mad."

"Poor boy! how you love me," she murmured; and for a moment her eyes rested on him with a queer look of regret in their brilliant depths.

"I worship you," he replied quietly. "But come, you must be famished," and he led the way upstairs to his dining-room, where supper was laid; and while Petrovna trifled with some chicken, she questioned him closely and curiously as to his visit to the Foreign Office and all matters connected with the journey, learning that he had engaged a saloon carriage in the Dover express that left Charing Cross between eight and nine at night, and made all arrangements to go at that time.

When she had learnt all she wanted to know, she became rather silent and thoughtful, and resisted all his importunities that she should go and lie down, declaring that she should remain in the *salon* with Surchen, the old Polish woman, who, to Gilbert's indignation, had remained sitting bolt upright on a chair like a wooden figure, apparently deaf and blind to all that was passing, still an insurmountable obstacle to that love-making in which the foolish young man would have wished to indulge.

"Do you like my dress," inquired the princess, touching the folds of a grey cashmere she wore, as she rose from the table, that the strange servants had loaded liberally with dainties.

"It is charming, like everything you wear. Are you going to be married in it?"

"Yes."

"What a splendid cross," touching a cross of brilliants hanging round her neck by a grey ribbon. "Is it the only ornament you mean to wear?"

"Yes; except a ring that matches it. Oh, by the way, dear Gilbert, this ring Paulo left at a jeweller's in Regent Street. I am loath to lose it; and as it may be long before either of us return to this country, will you, like the dear boy you are, go and fetch it for me?"

"Of course, dearest, I will; but there is plenty of time yet."

"Perhaps; but I want you with me for at least an hour before we drive to the church. I may be nervous," leaning over the back of his chair and placing her hand on his arm with a caressing gesture, utterly unlike her usual cold way, but glancing at the clock uneasily as she spoke, for the hands showed it was twenty minutes to nine. "Besides, I must have a bouquet," she went on hurriedly; "will you get me the prettiest one you can?"

"Your word is my law," he rejoined gaily, kissing the hand that lay on his arm; "and though it grieves me to leave you for even an hour, I go at your bidding," and taking up his hat, he went out.

The princess watched him from the window, and waved her hands gracefully as he looked up; but the moment he was out of sight a change came over her. The smiles died away, the mouth became firm and resolute, the eyes glowed with the fire of determination.

"Quick, Surchen, lock the door!" she exclaimed imperiously. "We must hurry—remember we have barely an hour. The Folkestone tidal train starts at 9.40. We are lost if we miss that;" and hastily tearing open a parcel the Pole held, she drew out a fair, curly wig, similar in colour to Gilbert's fair locks, and while her companion secured the doors, dashed into Lovelace's bedroom, and began speedily to divest herself of her grey gown and feminine apparel.

* * * * *

About an hour later, Gilbert returned to his rooms, the great blazing diamond on his finger and a costly bouquet in his hand.

He expected to find the princess where he left her, and surprised at not doing so, he went at once to his bedroom. An exclamation escaped his lips, for here all was confusion. His clothes were strewn about, and shirts, collars, gloves, boots and ties were scattered about higgledy-piggledy, while his largest portmanteau lay open and empty hard by. With a foreboding at his heart he tore at the bell.

"Where is Madame Petrovna?" he asked the servant who appeared.

"The lady has gone, sir," replied the man.

"Gone! What do you mean?" he gasped.

"I don't know, sir," responded James, who was slightly mystified by the whole proceeding. "I haven't seen the lady since you went out; but the old woman said I was to give you this," handing him a letter and then discreetly retiring.

For a moment he gazed at it speechlessly, and then tore it open with trembling hands.

"MON AMI,

"Will you ever forgive me? I have not only stolen your heart, but a suit of your clothes as well, and your passport, and papers. We are nearly the same height, and with a fair wig I shall pass very well for Mr. Gilbert Lovelace, and reach Russia, from which country I have been most unjustly exiled; and what is more, at St. Petersburg I shall meet and be united to Ivan, my Ivan, whom I love and adore even as you love me. Forgive me, and forget me; and accept my deepest gratitude and sincerest thanks for the help you have all unwittingly given me to regain my own country and my lover's society. Please keep the ring as a souvenir of

"Your grateful friend,

"PETROVNA DORMANOFF."

As Gilbert read the last word, he threw up his arms, and with a cry like a wounded animal, fell senseless on the floor.

* * * * *

Mr. Lovelace, junior, had a severe attack of brain fever that laid him low for many a long week; and Mr. Lovelace, senior, had enough to do in using his influence in high quarters to hush up the little Russian scandal; but when Gilbert recovered his senses and his health, no one said anything more about a diplomatic career for him. He went to Devonshire and settled down as a hog-breeding, sheep-rearing Devon squire; and after some six or seven years, married pretty Ella Wilford, the doctor's sister, to his mother's great delight, and made a good husband, and seemed quite content with his rustic, commonplace wife. All the same for that, though, he never quite forgot Princess Dormanoff, nor that episode in his otherwise dull and highly respectable life.

OVERSTRAINED HONOUR.

By NORA VYNNE,

AUTHOR OF "LADY ATHERTON'S SACHET," "A DIFFICULT CASE," ETC.

"I THINK you are very unkind to me, Judy."

As these words, delivered in a tone half complaining, half caressing, fell on her ears, Judith Gale looked up and laughed good-naturedly. She was lying on the floor at full length—and a good deal of it—a cushion under her head, and a copy of "As You Like It" (acting version) in her hands, she was reading softly to herself.

"You don't take the least interest in what I say, Judy."

"You see you have said it so often, my dear, and I am busy, really busy."

"Can't you attend to me for a little while? Just a little while. I want to talk to you."

"You generally do, 'and that when I am disposed to be busy ;' you always want to tell it all over again, and to ask me all the questions I have answered on an average eleven times a day since you knew him. Well, as nothing fresh has happened since eleven o'clock this morning when we last discussed the matter, my opinion is just what it was then ; I have nothing more to say, and I don't think you have."

This answer, though delivered in a perfectly good-natured tone, would have silenced any one in the world but Maggie Syke, but it had not the slightest effect on her. Maggie Syke was a small plump woman of about forty years old, but she did not look nearly her age until one looked closely ; she had fluffy colourless hair, big round china-blue eyes, and an appealing childlike manner, and a habit of keeping her little fat hands—plump and dimpled like a baby's—full in view. At Judy's rebuke she simply flopped down on the floor beside her, and began to stroke her hair gently, the wrong way of course, saying, in her pathetic little chant, "Listen to me. Don't be selfish and unkind."

"Unkind ! I am out and out the most patient and long-suffering creature that ever lived," said Judy emphatically ; "I listened to you for hours when I wanted to go to sleep last night, and I listened to you all the while we were at breakfast this morning ; and now do you know what would happen if we were two men ? I should just, in the friendliest manner possible, take you by the

shoulders, shove you out at the door and tell you to go to the ——. Oh, yes, it would be ill-mannered of course, but that is what I should do." She turned to her book and went on reading.

" 'I would not be thy executioner.' "

No, but you make me feel a strong tendency that way.

'Thou tellest me there is murder in mine eyes?'

No; not murder exactly. I think the jury would find it justifiable homicide—or femicide if you like it better."

"Judy, dear!"

"Look here, Meg," said Judy seriously, "I really do want to study. You had much better go down and practise your to-morrow's singing lesson. If he does love you, he won't love you any better for singing flat, and even if he does not, you need not torture him; go and practise, there's a good girl."

But the slight softening in her friend's tone was quite as much encouragement as Miss Syke needed.

"Then you think he *does* love me," she chanted.

Judith caught her lower lip between her teeth for a moment; it was a trick she had when her patience was tried. "I've had no evidence one way or another since breakfast-time, and you asked me seven times then."

"Ah, do be nice to me, Judy," with another irritating rub on the smooth dark hair; "I am so unhappy; you used to say you thought he liked me."

"I did say so. I thought from his manner the first time I went with you for your lesson that he liked you very much indeed, and when you asked me I said so."

"Well, if he liked me then, of course he likes me now."

Judy did not speak. She knew how Miss Syke's pathetic infantile manner, charming enough for a few days, was deadly wearisome after awhile, how her pretty confiding way of talking about herself pleased most people until they found she could talk of nothing else, and that what looked like a touching proof of confidence was simply the result of illimitable egotism.

"Do you think he likes me now?"

"My dear girl, if he does, he will tell you so himself."

"But I want to know what you think."

What Judith thought brought a hot blush to her face, but she hid it behind her book, murmuring:

" 'Tis but a peevish boy, yet he talks well."

Miss Syke got up, and walking to the glass, began to contemplate her reflection.

"Do you think I look older than he is? do you think he thinks so?"

"I have not the remotest means of knowing what he thinks."

"But what do you think yourself?"

"That 'Phebe' is a very pretty part, and I shall make something of her—if ever you give me time to study, that is."

"But about my age, dear?"

"You know what I think on that subject. Considering that we all profess to believe ourselves immortal, age does not matter on either side, and I can't see any difference between a woman of forty marrying a man of thirty and a man of forty marrying a woman of thirty, or a girl of eighteen, as more often happens."

"Then you think he might marry me."

"I think if he does, and you worry him as you worry me, he will have an uncommonly hard time of it."

"I wonder if he knows how old I am. I wish he had not sent me to his brother about that life insurance: you see I had to put my real age down, and his brother would be sure to tell it to him. Do you think that was why he sent me?"

"I do not, for two reasons; first, because he is a gentleman, and secondly, because I should say he has a tolerably fair idea of your age without resorting to underhand tricks."

"Then why should he send me there?"

"Because he was so good-natured as to wish you to have good legal advice gratis, and had no idea of the contemptible motives you would assign to him. I can't tell how such thoughts enter your mind, Maggie. I am quite sure they never enter Charles Rathlin's."

There was something in the tone which warned Miss Syke that her friend's patience had been tried almost too far. To be sure she had said the same things in answer to the same questions some seventeen times before, but never with quite so much decision. Miss Syke rose and, crossing the room, began to put on her bonnet and veil at the glass, arranging her colourless little curls with elaborate precision; but it was not in her to be silent long—after a few moments she began afresh:

"You came out with his name very fluently just now, Judy. I always call him *Mr. Rathlin*."

"Can't help it," said Judy shortly, "hear it at the theatre—got it on the programme—incidental music by Charles Rathlin, you know."

"I wish he had not written that music," said Maggie crossly; "he will be always at the theatre now."

"Nonsense, no one wants him there."

"But he goes, I am sure. I daresay you often see him when I don't know."

"Every single time I have seen him there, or anywhere else, I have told you," cried Judy indignantly; then, changing her tone, she added quietly, "I don't know why I should do so, but I have. Now do let me go on with my work, my dear."

"You're *very* cross this morning," said Maggie plaintively.

"Not cross; but what would you think if I came and worried you all the time you were having your singing lesson?"

"That would be very different; I could not sing if you did."

"Well, I can't read."

"There, then, I won't interrupt her any more, that I won't; she shall have all the afternoon to herself, that she shall. I have got to go out and give those wretched little children a music lesson, so you will have the room to yourself; it isn't quite time yet to go, though. Oh! I say, Judy, can you lend me a pair of gloves?"

"Yes. Top drawer, left hand corner."

"Thank you, darling; which pair shall I take? May I have the dove-coloured pair? I wish your gloves were not so large for me. Oh! may I put this pin in my veil?"

"If you like."

"Thank you so much, dear. Oh! Judy dear, one thing before I go; will you not change your mind and come down to Saltsands with me at Easter?"

"No, can't afford it."

"It would be so nice. Mr. Rathlin will be only a little way off, and he has promised to come over sometimes and help me with my cantata."

"Awfully good of him, but I'm not writing a cantata."

"But you would be company for me; we could give up our rooms here and take a little cottage together. Mr. Rathlin thinks it would be a charming plan, he was quite taken with the idea; he thinks it is so much better for me not to be alone, people get so egotistical when they live alone; they think of no one but themselves. You had much better come with me."

"Thanks, I prefer to be by myself and risk the egotism."

"But you don't think of me a bit."

Judy gave a smothered laugh. "No need, dear, you think of yourself so industriously," she murmured; but Miss Syke did not hear her, she was going on steadily with her own reflections.

"It does look as if he liked me, doesn't it? he was quite eager about your coming, too. Before I told him you might perhaps come with me he did not seem as if he quite liked my plan, and when I asked if he would come over now and then to help me with my cantata, he was very doubtful about it. You see, he could not very well visit me here alone."

"I don't see why. I'd have any one I liked to come and see me wherever I lived."

"Oh!" in a superior tone, "but I have been brought up to the habit of having a chaperone."

"Thanks for the reminder. I haven't, but I have got on very well."

"It is a great risk to marry any one so much younger than myself. I am sure an elderly husband would make me happier; what do you think, dear?"

Judy gave no answer, so Miss Syke went on placidly :

"Of course I shall give up teaching music when I am married, and spend all my time improving myself."

"Nice sort of wife you'll make at that rate."

"Of course I shall fulfil all my duties properly, Judy. I am not the sort of woman to shirk my duties. I should make a good wife, don't you think so, dear?"

"Oh, charming!"

"But good-bye now, dear. I'm going now, I shan't be back till tea-time. I have some shopping to do after I have given my lessons. How I detest those three tiresome children and their prosy old uncle. Did I tell you they called him 'Molly Darling'—he is always putting on porous plasters, and talking about himself and his ailments. Well, good-bye."

"Good-bye."

"Ain't you going to kiss me, dear?"

Judy got up from the floor and kissed her. Maggie Syke put her sentimental round little face up against the girl's strong young shoulder (brushing off a good deal of superfluous powder on to it) and sighed heavily.

"Oh! Judy dear, it is so dreadful to be in love; do be nice to me," she chanted.

"'Why, I am sorry for thee, gentle Sylvia,' " quoted Judy with a nervous laugh; "I dare say you've got it very bad, dear, and he is—he is awfully interesting, and all that—but keep it in bounds, Meg; don't show it till you are sure; he won't like you any the less."

"Why, Judy, how your heart is beating; you ought not to fling yourself about as you do. It can't be good for you to lie on the floor like that—put on your hat and walk to High Street Station with me; it will do you good, and I have so much more I want to say to you."

Judy broke into a laugh, and shaking Miss Syke into an upright position, straightened her bonnet and literally pushed her through the door.

"Good-bye Meg," she called cheerfully, "try to bring back something fresh to talk about when you come in."

Then she shut the door, and picking up her copy of "As You Like It," which she had left on the floor, began to walk slowly up and down the room, reading and thinking by turns. She was a tall handsome girl, a trifle angular and unformed as yet, but straight and supple, with clear-cut features, and a bright resolute face; her very footsteps sounded firm and decided as she walked to and fro.

Judith Gale and Margaret Syke were friends of about a year's standing. They had made each other's acquaintance in a boarding-house where they both had been staying, and had taken to each other. Judith had been amused and attracted by the other's child-

like and confiding ways, and, moreover, had pitied her because the marriage of a brother had forced her to leave her home and fight for herself in the world. After a time, when she found that Miss Syke's brother and sister-in-law had been perfectly willing for her to reside with them, and wrote her affectionate and hearty letters, Judy's sympathy cooled a little, and when she found that Miss Syke had a nice little fortune of her own, and that in her case fighting for herself simply meant making spasmodic efforts to achieve distinction, first in one walk of life and then in another, it died out altogether.

Still, as she had begun the friendship, Judy kept it up, for she was not the sort of girl who changes readily; besides she had really a sort of tolerant regard for her egotistical sentimental little friend.

On the other hand, Maggie Syke had taken to Judy as she had taken to dozens before, and had made her the last of a long series of bosom friends; but she had certainly never kept a friend so long before, generally she wore out their patience or grew tired of them in a few months; for one of her strongest characteristics was that her friends must have no friends but herself, and this was trying to girls with sisters, or of a sociable disposition. Now, in Judy's case there was no difficulty, for a lonelier girl did not live; she was a solitary hard-working orphan, with few friends, and no desire to change them; she had positively lived nine months with Maggie Syke without finding out her jealousy, and it was only since Miss Syke had taken up music and fallen in love with her music-master that she had noticed the trait through the bitter hatred Maggie seemed to entertain for all Mr. Rathlin's other pupils.

"Poor Meg, poor Meg, what a wretch I feel," murmured Judy as she walked up and down with her book in her hand. "What a wretch, and what a sneak.

'So holy and so perfect is my love,
And I in such a poverty of Grace.'

No, that's out of my part—Silvius says that. Oh, poor little Meg, I wonder if it was my fault. He certainly seemed to like her that first day I saw him; she told me to notice and I noticed.

'There be some women, Silvius, had they marked him
In parcels as I did would have gone near
To fall in love with him; but for my part
I love him not, nor hate him not, and yet——'

Oh, dear, I shall never get this learned, I wonder is it my fault he has changed.

'He said mine eyes were black and my hair black.'

No, he didn't; he said I ought to take care she had some hot tea whenever she came in, as if I had nothing else to do but sit by the fire and keep her tea hot. That certainly looked as if he were in love with her; a man in love always forgets that any one can have

anything more important to do than look after the woman who interests him. He made me feel quite selfish for having any affairs of my own. Oh, he was certainly fond of her then.

‘For what had he to do to chide at me.’

No, that’s the wrong place. Well,” as the landlady opened the door. “Well, Mrs. Grass?”

“Mr. Rathlin wishes to see you, miss.”

Judy started, the resolute look on her face hardened, she shut up her book with a snap.

“I will be bitter with him, and passing short,”

she murmured, but she came forward with a very commonplace manner.

“I am so sorry Miss Syke is out,” she said.

“It is not of any consequence, I have only brought her some papers—examination papers.”

“Oh, she will know all about them, I suppose?”

“I don’t think she will; I am afraid I shall have to ask you to give her a message,” said Mr. Rathlin quietly.

“It is a pity you should have brought them when Maggie was out; I thought you knew she went out on Wednesdays, as you found her the pupils she goes to.”

She did not look at him, although he was a very pleasant object to look at, being tall and well built, with a handsome clean-shaved face and shining close-cut dark hair. He had none of the haggard raggedness of the conventional musician; he looked something between a country gentleman and a barrister.

When he saw the girl’s face studiously turned away, a look of resolution that quite equalled her own, rose to his eyes; he walked slowly towards her with the papers in his hands.

“Will you be so kind as to tell her,” he began, “that I know very well she cannot answer the questions off-hand, she must look up the answers in the books I have lent her. Tell her I am not trying to find out what she knows, but to put her in the way of knowing a little more.”

Judy glanced at the papers. “I don’t know much of music,” she said, “but it strikes me that any one who cannot work these will be simply wasting time trying to write a cantata.”

“Yes, have you said that to Miss Syke?”

“I am not her music master.”

“Do you think she would believe you if you did say that?”

“I don’t profess to know anything of music.”

“But you do profess to know something of character, and so do I. I believe the attempt to write a cantata will be a very useful lesson in music to Miss Syke.”

“It will be a very cruel lesson.”

"But it will be private, and therefore less painful than it would be to learn what she must learn in full class."

"Is that why you want her to go to Saltsands?" said Judy, her manner relaxing a little.

"I want her to go! It was no suggestion of mine."

"Ah, no more it was, I forgot; your suggestion was that I should go with her."

"Well, what then? It was a very good suggestion."

"Maggie seems to be under the impression that it came from her."

"Well, perhaps it did—let us suppose it did, if she said so; but no, Miss Gale, let us be frank. I suggested it, and is there any reason why I should not?"

Judy was silent, she would not say "no," and dared not say "yes," lest he should ask for the reason, and so have an opportunity of saying what she was determined not to hear.

Rathlin went on, "It is not good for man to be alone, and it is worse for a woman; it is bad enough while she is at work, but a lonely holiday is frightful. You had much better go with Miss Syke."

"I am sorry my own affairs prevent my being as serviceable to Miss Syke as you think I should."

"And who told you it was merely for Miss Syke's sake I made the suggestion, pray?"

"That is what she believes, and it is natural she should believe it."

"And if I told you it was of you I was thinking?"

"I should not believe you. I am not your pupil. It would be very presumptuous of you to try to direct what I do, or where I go. No; if you said anything of that kind, I should tell you to say it to Miss Syke—it may interest her, it does not interest me."

"You will not believe it was for your sake?"

"Not for one moment."

"But if I declared to you that it was?"

"I should say, Good afternoon!"

They were standing facing each other now, and she saw that all her fencing was of no use—the fight was coming. So she stood, meeting his eyes quietly, both her hands well in view, clasped carelessly but firmly together; but all her courage could not keep the veins in her throat from throbbing and trembling; he saw the shadows quiver on them in the dim afternoon light.

If she was resolute, so was he. He saw how strong and true and high-hearted she was, and told himself he would not leave her until he had won her. Aloud he said coolly:

"Oh, 'Good afternoon' is pretty well as a beginning; but I am going to say much more than that. I have come to tell you how I love you, and I won't be turned aside from saying it."

"Well?"

Charles Rathlin remembered once playing a charming game with some children, wherein the fun consisted in one of the party being a patriot and being shot (they were young children, but had already discovered that the natural end of a patriot is an early and violent death). The shooting was accomplished by a pint of cold water discharged full in the face from a milk basin. Rathlin had been the patriot, and that "Well?" recalled his sensations at the time very forcibly indeed. It took his breath away for a moment, but after a time he went on, though not so fluently this time:

"That means you knew it, of course. That's good; for I tried to make it plain to you. I love you very much indeed. I know I am not good enough for you, I don't ask you to think I am, but I do ask you to believe I love you very truly."

"How can I think he can be mine and true who has been false to Fulvia?"

That's not in my play, but when I get hold of Shakspeare I wander about a little."

"Don't wander now; keep to the point, and the point is, I love you."

"But I had rather talk of Fulvia."

"As you please. She was elderly, by the way, and of a jealous and crabbed disposition."

"Antony knew that, or should have known it, before he asked her to marry him."

"I quite agree with you. But suppose Antony had never asked her; never said a word that could be construed into an intention of doing so."

"Never given her violets, nor taken flowers from her, never bullied a girl he saw for the first time, for not taking more care of her," went on Judith coolly, her eyes still meeting his, her hands still careless and impassive.

"Good heavens! she asked me for the violets," he exclaimed angrily. "Could I help her bringing me the other things? Is it possible she ——"

"Stay, if you please, Mr. Rathlin. We will keep Miss Syke's name out of our conversation: you have no right to suppose for a moment that we have made you the subject of discussion. Any opinion I may have formed has been formed from my own observation."

Rathlin recovered his self-control.

"If you have formed any opinion concerning me I have a right to know it," he said.

"Certainly. When I went with her to your class-room, I saw, or fancied I saw, a vast difference between your manner to her and your manner to your other pupils."

"Go on."

"When we remained after the rest of the class had left, and you talked to her about her own affairs and yours, all you said,

every word, every tone, every look, went to make me believe that you cared for her."

"So I did; I thought her charming. Go on."

"I have no more to say."

"Oh, yes, you have if you intend to be just. You spoke of an opinion."

"Yes; I saw you cared for her—any one could have seen that. I supposed you were not well enough off to marry, and so you did not speak to her."

"That was so; you were perfectly right. I am better off now, by the way, but that is not the question. Go on."

"Afterwards"—her voice did tremble now, but she went on bravely—"afterwards I began to think that—I had been mistaken."

"You did not," he said with such quiet force that the words did not sound rude. "You did not think so, and it is beneath you to say what is not true."

"Then, if you will have it, I thought you had changed your mind, and I thought I would never be a party to the betrayal of my friend. I have no more to say."

"No. Then listen to me, and judge me fairly. I may have been to blame, but I don't deserve such hard words or such contemptuous tones, and I will not bear them, even from you. I thought I cared for Miss Syke; I did care for her at first, every one who sees her likes her at first, every one who grows better acquainted with her loses their liking. I can't help it if I speak cruelly of a woman; you force me to defend myself. You know yourself how every student who comes to my classes has been her devoted slave for a day or two, and then indifferent to her. I did like her, and if I had ever told her so, if I had ever said a word of love to her, I should deserve to have you shield yourself behind your loyalty, and pierce me through and through with your scorn; but I have never said one word beyond ordinary friendship to her."

"True. But why not?"

"For the reason you guessed. It was a good reason; she had told me of the luxury she had been brought up in, and I hesitated to ask her to share my poverty. That hesitation saved me. It was meant for her good; but surely I have a right to let it serve for mine?"

"I do not know."

"Think. Suppose she had liked me, and never told me so; then suppose she found out she really loved some one else; would it be treason for her to marry the man she loved, because of an idle, passing fancy for me—a fancy I'd had no idea of?"

"Oh, but if she had an idea of it?"

For the first time he seemed to lose heart; the fight was going very much against him. He dropped his head and hesitated; he could not deny her words; he knew poor Maggie Syke had shown a very marked fondness for him; but then the like had more than

once happened to the handsome young musician, without any fault of his, and he could not tell how far he had been to blame in this case.

"Has she said—does she ——" he began.

"We will leave her out of it. You are to assume that she has never confided in me. But if I could see, and could form an opinion, could not she?"

"Good heavens! Is it my fault if you were so quick to see what I wished to keep to myself?" he cried. "Am I to be bound by a three days' fancy, that neither of you had right to know of, to marry a woman ten years older than myself? Do you know what she told me you said one day? That you pitied her husband, if ever she married, for he would be the most wretched man on the face of the earth; that she would wear out his very life with her jealousy and her exacting temper. She told me that as if it were a joke; you know best whether it is true or not, whether you meant it when you said it."

Judy remembered the speech; it was the result of a week's worry, when Maggie had suspected her of a desire to strike up a friendship with a girl who was playing in the same piece with her, and she had most certainly meant the words when she had spoken them.

Rathlin went on:

"And you would condemn me to that—it would be torment, perpetual hopelessness. Think of it! You must know very little of life, or you would not dare to wish such a thing. You say I am bound to her——"

"No, no! I do not say so—I was wrong if I said so before. You must not marry her if you hate her so; it would be terrible for you both if you married her."

"Then I am free?"

"Yes, you are free; it is right that you should be free. I see now it would be intolerable if you were to be bound by a slight fancy that, for most generous reasons, you never spoke of—your mere thoughts that we had no right to know cannot, must not, bind you."

"And if I am free?"

He moved towards her eagerly. She sprang back against the wall, entreating him with a passionate gesture to stand back.

"Do not look like that, for God's sake! Do not look so glad, or I cannot bear it. Yes, you are free—free to leave her, free to marry whom you will, free to marry any woman in the world, *except me!*"

"Judy! Why?"

"No, not me—not her friend—not the girl she took to see you, who rejoiced with her in her fancied good fortune, who heard day by day—yes, I must own to it now—who heard of every word you said, of every sign you gave of caring for her—not her confidant,

the sharer of her hopes and her fears—not her friend, her one friend.”

“Then my freedom is of no value, for if I do not marry you, I don’t care what becomes of me. I may just as well marry her as not. Oh, Judy! think again. I will make you so happy.”

“Could you, do you think—could any one make me happy if I acted so vilely?”

“It is no fault of yours that she told you; you never asked for her confidence—I am sure you never wanted it. Why should you suffer because she can’t keep from talking about herself?”

“You show me my fault clearly. I ought to have gone away at once, when I saw—when I suspected what would happen.”

“Listen to me, Judy. I love you, I believe on my soul that you love me. We meant to do no wrong—we have done no wrong, only circumstances have been very cruel to us. Is it just that we should suffer because of circumstances that we could not help? Will it make her any happier to know that we are miserable?”

“It will make her much more miserable to think her friend has stolen her happiness. I tell you I will not do it.”

“Judy! this is madness!”

“No, it is honour. What would you say of a man who betrayed his friend as you would have me betray mine?”

“But you are not a man, you are a woman. No one expects this tragic honour from you; no one thinks of expecting it from a woman.”

“Oh, yes! I am a woman, with all a woman’s faults and weakness; but, woman as I am, God made me true as death, and you shall not make me less than He meant me to be.”

She stood erect and proud, not hiding her suffering, but triumphant over it; and seeing her fearless face, and hearing her resolute tone, he knew that there was no appeal from the sentence she had spoken.

The fight was over, and he was conquered. He knew it, and submitting heart-broken to his defeat, was yet glad that the woman he loved was great enough to win such a victory. Had he not loved her for her perfect truth, her immaculate honour? And if he had been able to break down her honour and truth, would not such a victory have been a calamity for them both?

Woman-like, she half rued her triumph when she saw her antagonist conquered; she came close to him and laid her hand on his.

“I cannot bear to see you suffer,” she said.

“You shall not see it—I will go. Good-bye, dear; you have broken my heart—I think you have broken your own—but we must bear it, for you have chosen the right.”

“Good-bye.”

“Good-bye; you know what those words mean—‘God be with you.’ God be with you, sweet, in all the years to come. Do not

think I am sorry you will not be less than yourself for my sake—I will try to be glad that I could not lower you.”

“Good-bye—Good-bye.”

She had moved to a little distance now, and turned her face away. She held out her hand without looking at him.

“Is this all? It is a very cold parting when we think how we love each other, and that we shall never meet again. Surely, for the last time—for the first and last time—”

“No, no! I cannot, I cannot!”

The pain in her tone was so pitiful that he could not insist. Letting her hand fall, he knelt upon the floor and kissed the hem of her skirt, then without speaking again he left her.

He left her; he was wrought to such a pitch of excited honour and reverence, that it never occurred to him to think how many a lover would have refused to leave a woman who dared not trust herself to kiss him.

And she? She brushed away a few bitter, hot tears that rushed through her eyelids and stood a moment trembling and irresolute. It almost seemed as if she would give way to the passionate emotion she had held so well in check until now; but she did not; she went to a cupboard in a corner of the room, and took out—a bottle of poison? a dagger? a nine-barrelled peace-maker? Oh, dear, no! a pot of Liebig’s extract, a teacup, and a tablespoonful of port wine. From these, with the addition of a little boiling water, she concocted a very nasty but very invigorating compound, and having drunk it, lay down on the floor to study “As You Like It” in peace until Maggie came in.

You see she was a working woman and had no leisure to indulge her emotions.

It was some time before Miss Syke came in: when she did she went straight up to the looking-glass, and after flinging her bonnet and mantle upon the sofa, began to contemplate her reflection with a good deal of complacency.

“You are late, are you not?” said Judy.

“Yes; have you been dull without me? I have been doing a good deal of shopping on my way home. You were very unkind to me before I went out, but if you can spare me ten minutes for once in a while I’ll tell you something interesting.”

“What is it, dear?”

Any one but Maggie Syke would have seen the weariness in the girl’s face, would have heard the pathetic effort at cheerfulness in her voice, but Maggie Syke had something of interest to communicate, and noticed nothing.

“You don’t know why I have been so long?”

“You were shopping, were you not; have you bought many things?”

“Yes, and some of them are pretty things—wedding things, Judy.”

“ Oh, your *trousseau* ; don't you think —— ”

“ Something very important has happened,” said Maggie impressively ; “ I have come to my senses at last.”

“ What do you mean ? ”

“ It is not to be expected that I should waste my time waiting while an obscure musician makes up his mind whether he can afford to marry me or not.”

“ Do you mean—are you saying that you are not going to think any more about Mr. Rathlin, after raving about him all these three months ? ”

Judy could scarcely believe her ears, and spoke out her amazement without choosing her words.

“ I have not been doing anything of the sort,” said Miss Syke, with dignity, placidly proceeding to believe what it had become convenient to believe ; “ I may have wondered now and again if he cared for me, but that is all.”

“ Oh ! ” said Judy.

“ I have something else to say, dear, only you don't take any interest in *me*.”

“ I take an interest in this matter, though ; what has made you come to this conclusion ? Let me hear.”

“ You know my pupils have an uncle ? ”

“ Yes, the prosy old man they call ‘ Molly Darling.’ ”

“ He is not old nor prosy, and they ought not to call him anything of the sort. Why he is heir to a baronetcy.”

Miss Syke spoke as if the prospect of the title conferred perpetual youth and immunity from nicknames.

“ Well, what has ‘ Sir Molly ’ to do with us ? ”

“ Not anything to do with you, my dear ; but he has—that is—he will have a great deal to do with me in future. He has asked me to marry him. You see, dear,” with a sweet little giggle, “ some people think me attractive if you don't.”

Judy pushed back the hair from her eyes—a bewildered incredulous look on her face.

“ And Charles Rathlin ? ” she said.

“ Ah, well, Judy, you can't expect me to consider him ; I must show a proper regard for my own future ; I could not have got on as the wife of a struggling artist ; I am much more fitted for society and luxury. I called and left a note at Mr. Rathlin's rooms, telling him I should not go there for any more lessons as I am going to be married, then I went for a walk with—with *him*—you know, dear, and then I did some shopping, and then I came home. Won't you congratulate me, dear ? Luke—I think he has such a nice name, Luke Lowther Rothesay—Luke is not more than fifty-five or fifty-seven, and his uncle is several years older, so I shall be Lady Rothesay some day ; perhaps I may be able to help you, for I shan't be ashamed to know you, dear. I do hope poor Mr. Rathlin won't feel it very much ; I can't help it, you know, if

people will admire me, can I? I have a right to choose whom I will marry; I can't marry just to oblige him. What is the matter, Judy? Are you laughing or crying? Why don't you answer?"

But before Judy had time to answer, the door was flung open with a crash, and Charles Rathlin rushed into the room—an open letter in his hand.

"Judy, it's all right," he cried; "I found this when I got home. She doesn't want me; she is going to marry some one else. Judy! Judy!"

And Judy, without answering, ran straight into his arms and rested there silent. It was his turn to speak now, and he was in no hurry.

"Well, this is very surprising," said Miss Syke, but neither of them seemed to hear her.

"My darling," cried Rathlin at last, "how brave you were, and how we've suffered; how we tortured ourselves. But it is over now, and it is worth all we bore to meet like this, to hold each other like this, to kiss each other as we do now."

This remark was illustrated profusely. Miss Syke could not understand the situation at all, she was simply dumbfounded.

"I think," she said severely, "you have both utterly forgotten my presence, even my existence."

She was quite right, so they had.

OUR FRIENDS IN THE HUNTING FIELD.

By MRS. EDWARD KENNARD,

AUTHOR OF "THE GIRL IN THE BROWN HABIT," "KILLED IN THE OPEN,"
"A CRACK COUNTY," "LANDING A PRIER," ETC., ETC.

PART V.

1.—THE JEALOUS WOMAN.

THE jealous woman is not a nice person at any time, but she is rather less so in the hunting field than in any other place; perhaps because her peculiar failing is there rendered patent to the whole world. She cannot keep it sufficiently under control to prevent people who possess ordinary powers of observation from finding it out, or from noticing how unfairly she rides. Her spirit of emulation passes the customary bounds of politeness, and is too strong not to be resented and censured.

As a rule she is perfectly unconscious of the ridicule which her jealousy evokes, and would be very much surprised and very much annoyed if the comments of her fellow-sportsmen came to her ears. She is under the impression that she is the "observed of all observers," and immensely admired. Her vanity even prevents her from seeing that the men are not as civil as they might be, and avoid her whenever they decently can.

The truth is, she treats them with such scant courtesy that they think there is no harm in paying her back in her own coin. They cease to regard her as a lady, and cannot associate her with anything either feminine or gentle. She is in their eyes that most odious of all creatures extant, an unsexed woman. So with all her pushing and shoving, bustling and cramming, she gains very little.

The gentlemen view her with a dislike bordering on disgust, and are unsparing in their criticisms. Quite unaware of the sentiments they entertain towards her, she endeavours over and over again to beguile them into conversation, and when hounds are not running, tries her utmost to ingratiate herself in their favour, but her efforts in this direction are seldom crowned by success. The men hold obstinately aloof, refuse to smile at her witticisms or show any approval of her smart sayings. For she has a sharp tongue, and can demolish another woman's reputation rather better

than her neighbours. She is clever, caustic and amusing, has a nice figure, and is good-looking into the bargain; and yet the male sex, with all these points in her favour, cannot forgive her for usurping their place at every fence they come to, and for seizing an unfair advantage over them on every possible occasion. Such conduct blots out all charm, and creates a feeling of anger and resentment in the masculine breast. Being a woman, they have not even the satisfaction of swearing at her, which adds insult to injury.

Ladies may ride as hard as anybody else, and yet ride in a feminine fashion, and not get in the way. The dangerous woman is bad enough, but the jealous one is a thousand times worse. The former errs chiefly through ignorance and an exuberance of animal spirits that produces an intoxicating effect; but the latter can plead no such excuse. She knows quite well what she is about, and offends deliberately, altogether ignoring the precept of "Do as thou wouldst be done by." When under the influence of the insane passion that masters her, she is no longer mistress of herself, and will commit every species of absurdity. She will ride a desperate finish, in a ploughed field up to her horse's hocks, whilst hounds have actually never left the covert, and are still hunting busily inside, simply because she has happened to catch sight of a female skirt fluttering ahead. With elbows squared, and arms, hands, legs at work, she imagines that she is doing great things, calculated to rouse the enthusiasm of the whole field.

She never hears the laughter of the bystanders, or sees the contemptuous smiles that wreath every face. A mad struggle for supremacy rages within her breast. It is as if a devil had taken possession of her and converted her into an irresponsible being.

She gallops madly down a road, bespattering her feminine rivals with mud, never dreams of apologizing, and does not draw rein until she has far outstripped them. Then she looks round triumphantly, her face all flushed and heated, and wearing an expression of satisfaction, which seems to say, "There! I am first. It's not a bit of use your trying to get before me, for I shan't put up with such an indignity for a minute. You must see how much better I can ride than you, so what is the good of your trying to compete?"

Most women confine their jealousy exclusively to members of their own sex, but there are some, though happily they are in the minority, who extend it even to the men, and who cannot endure to see more than one or two of the very hardest riders of the whole hunt in front of them. Their poor horses are dreadfully to be pitied, for they treat them with a harshness and a want of consideration that borders on downright cruelty. The animal is regarded as a mere machine, a galloping and jumping piece of mechanism, which must never get out of order, and must go as

long as the rider chooses, without respect to health, humour, or fatigue. Such people are not fit to have horses. They hit them, they urge them, they let heavy gates slam on their sensitive quarters, in order to slink through, and they gallop them up hill and down, through bogs and over plough, and don't once pause to take a very necessary pull. To get on, on, on at all hazards is the only thing they care for, and this they call horsemanship and riding to hounds. Ugh!

Poor, noble steed! The more generous he is, the greater is the advantage taken of him. A jealous woman is not worthy of a good horse. She should always ride a sluggard, since pity, mercy, tenderness, every feminine attribute are merged in the frantic desire to occupy a prominent place, and let no other female get ahead. Ambition is turned to striving, courage to mean emulation; good sense flies, and envy, hatred and malice reign in its place.

If some similarly-constituted individual—for there are jealous men as well as jealous women—attempts to take her turn, she is the first to cry out in tones of severe indignation, "Don't cut in, sir. Now, sir, what are you doing?" or words to that effect. But she thinks nothing of doing so herself. In truth, it is her usual practice. The fact is, she is not a true sportswoman. Her love of the chase is not a genuine, but a spurious passion. It is the competition of one person riding against another that rouses her to enthusiasm, and not the beautiful sight of a pack of well-bred fox-hounds flashing like a streak of silver over the green pastures in pursuit of their quarry.

Little cares she for either fox or hounds. "Who was first, second and third? Did you see where I was, and how well I rode?" are the sole thoughts occupying her mind. Everything else is as naught in comparison. She has neither a kindly nor generous nature. When other women get falls and meet with accidents, though she pretends to condole, in her heart she rejoices at their misfortunes. She seems to imagine that in avoiding similar disasters she is possessed of superior skill and knowledge.

She can be pleasant enough to the ladies who don't "go." They are not in her way, and don't offend her susceptibilities; but those who ride hard inspire sentiments of such extreme hostility, that she has the greatest difficulty in concealing them. Her artificial politeness and vinegery-sweet speeches deceive no one. They are too laboured, and lack sincerity. Genuine kindness is felt to be wanting. Everybody laughs at the jealous woman behind her back, and she has hardly a single friend, male or female, in the whole hunt. Cold civility or disdainful tolerance greets her on all sides.

If only she could divest herself of a certain uneasy consciousness, which makes her erroneously suppose that people take a vital interest in her performances, and never weary of discussing them, she would enjoy the chase a great deal more than she does at

present. But she can't realize the very simple fact that nobody cares twopence whether she be first or last, jumps or doesn't jump, and that she is not the central point of attention, on which two or three hundred pairs of eyes are continually riveted. Folks as a rule have enough to do looking after themselves, without looking after her, and in the majority of cases are taken up with their own doings, not those of their neighbours. Number One is of such paramount importance to the jealous woman, that she can't understand how it is the interesting numeral does not prove equally so to her companions.

If anything goes wrong out hunting, her horse refuses, or she gets left behind, indignant at occupying a backward position she prefers to come straight home, and is ready to cry with vexation and mortification. All her pleasure for the day is gone. She can't reconcile herself to the humiliation of riding about with the shirkers and roadsters. For these reasons she seldom derives any real enjoyment from a day's hunting. So many things have to go right, and even if they do, there is nearly always a drawback, in the shape of some other hard-riding woman, perhaps younger and with more nerve, who throws down the gauntlet. It is impossible to be happy under such conditions. Her philosophy is not sufficient to enable her to see how very immaterial it is whether Brown, Jones, or Robinson holds the proud position of heading the hard-riding division. The triumphs of the chase are very fleeting, and often depend quite as much upon the horse as upon the rider, and yet she hankers after them with an inordinate eagerness, amounting to positive folly.

Out of the saddle, the jealous woman is not unfrequently a pleasant and lady-like person, both conversible and intelligent; but in it she assumes a different character altogether, and appears completely to lose her head. Or does her real nature come to the surface, thanks to the savage excitement occasioned by fox-hunting?

Anyhow, the desire for distinction, which in a moderate degree may be regarded as a virtue, becomes in her case a foolish and absorbing passion which makes her appear in the most unfavourable light.

It destroys her feminine qualities, and reduces her to the level of a very inferior man.

Moreover, it renders her a target for jeers, jests and sneers of every description.

If she only knew the truth, she might perhaps be brought to realize that in return for an indifferent, "Oh, ah! yes, she goes very hard," this is all she gains.

She alienates her friends, and as the years pass becomes more and more isolated, until at last, when her turn comes to meet with a bad accident, the voice of public opinion exclaims: "What! nearly dead! Concussion of the brain—picked up in—

sensible! Ah, well, serves her right. She always would ride so infernally jealous."

What is the result? Her craving for admiration and pre-eminence ends in "serves her right."

Misguided woman! Before this harsh verdict is passed upon you, can't you amend your ways? It is not difficult. It is only to get into your head that nobody cares two straws what you do and what you don't do in the hunting field, except yourself. You are just as much an insignificant atom there as in the great big world. And whether the atom jumps this bullfinch or that, shirks one place, avoids another, passes a fellow atom, or is passed by it in return, what matters it? A month—a year hence, and will not all your keen rivalry appear very petty and very ridiculous?

2.—THE BORE.

OF all the people we meet in the hunting field, if we were honestly to examine our feelings, the one we most dislike is probably the bore—the fellow whose words go in at one ear and out at the other, and who never has the sense or tact to perceive that his long-winded and interminable stories are infinitely wearisome to the listener.

And the worst of it is, there are so many bores about. The genus is so horribly common, and wherever men are gathered together, there they exist in numbers.

You fly from one only to fall headlong into the arms of another, and get involved in a second tedious narrative before you have had time to shake off the unpleasant impression produced by the first. On probing into the depths of human nature, many rare virtues and agreeable qualities are often discoverable; but the hardest thing of all to find is originality—that little fruitful germ of variation, removed from the vulgar type, which is closely allied to genius.

The bore has not a particle of originality in his whole composition. If he had he would be a character and not a bore. As it is, he is prosy and dull and commonplace to a degree almost past conception. If he *would* only hold his tongue; but, good Heavens! how the man talks. His jaws are never at rest. The subject of conversation he chooses is nearly always himself, or his immediate belongings. Though interesting, no doubt, to him, these topics are not equally so to you. The difficulty is to concentrate one's attention sufficiently to appear decently civil. You are seized by an irresistible inclination to listen to what the people all about you are saying, and you feel unpleasantly conscious that your absent "exactly's, just so's and indeed's," lack the genuine ring of honest sympathy. The whole time that the unconscious bore is holding forth with great volubility and complacency, your entire energies are devoted to pondering over the best means of effecting an escape without doing violence to his susceptibilities. You

wait breathlessly for a pause, which never seems to come. With the best will in the world, it is impossible to derive any pleasure from a conversation that is so entirely one-sided. No matter how it may have been started, the bore always works back to himself and *his* ideas, and utterly refuses to listen to yours. He is much too egotistical to allow of any reciprocity. If through some strange chance he asks a neighbour after his health, he does not wait to hear the reply, but immediately begins a long tirade about his own.

"Ah, my good sir, that was precisely what happened in my case. You remember the day I got that bad fall over timber? I have never recovered from the effects. I feel them constantly. The muscles of my back have been permanently injured. Rheumatism set in, and even now, every time there is a change in the weather, I can't tell you what agonies I suffer. I don't suppose any one is such a martyr as I am. These east winds kill me. They pinch me up, take away my appetite, and upset my liver altogether. Cartwright ordered me to take podophyllin and taraxacum, but what's the good of that? One can't go on taking those sort of messes all one's life. Eh, what? you suffer too? Oh, ah! yes, very likely, very likely. By-the-by, did I tell you about my chestnut mare?"

So he runs on, and won't hearken to you when you try to put in a small word in return, and try to relate *your* experiences and *your* ailments.

The bore is a tremendous hand at dunning. He is always getting up penny readings and entertainments for his particular village, to which he expects all his acquaintances to subscribe. Now it is a church to be restored, anon a stained window to be set up, again, a testimonial to some parish authority whom you know nothing about. But rather than get inveigled into a conversation, you give him half-a-sovereign or a sovereign as the case may be, and fight shy of him for the rest of the season.

But if there is one time more than any other when you pray heart and soul to avoid falling into the clutches of the bore, that time is when hounds are busy drawing a covert. At such seasons, he literally buttonholes you, and rambling on in his usual prosy manner, marches you up and down, up and down, until you are reduced to a state of white heat, and mentally apostrophize your companion whenever a whimper proceeds from the pack. You find yourself compelled to listen to some long uninteresting narrative, instead of being able to dash off in pursuit the instant the fox breaks away. And so you probably lose your start and your temper both together, and use more forcible language than is desirable.

The majority of bores are grumblers as well. Finding fault is an amusement which gives their tongues a fine opportunity of wagging at other people's expense. Whenever sport is poor, they are the first to cry out, though by no means the hardest to

ride. Nothing is rightly managed in their estimation. They are persuaded that if they had the direction of affairs each day would be productive of a brilliant run; but as they haven't, everything is in a state of muddle and confusion. To begin with, hounds are always either too fat or too lean, too slack or too keen, too noisy or too mute. If they go fast, they ought to go slow; if they go slow, they ought to go fast. But the grumbler's peculiar scapegoat is the huntsman. That unfortunate individual, whether justly or unjustly, invariably comes in for condemnation. Epithet after epithet is heaped upon his devoted head. He is a blockhead, an idiot, a fool. Words fail to describe his shortcomings and crass stupidity. He can't hunt, he can't ride, he don't even know the run of a fox. He's as slow as an old woman, and as conceited as a young one.

Neither does the master escape censure. Indeed, indirectly he bears the brunt of the blows.

"He mounts the men badly. Their horses are a positive disgrace to the hunt. He has no notion of keeping the field in order, and always contrives to go to the wrong covert at the wrong time."

In short, the grumbler is never satisfied. To express approbation would detract from his dignity, at all events in his own estimation. No matter how good the sport, he invariably considers that it ought and would have been better had his precious advice only been adopted at the critical moment when hounds threw up their heads and came to the first check. He is ever ready to tender counsel; and one of his peculiarities consists in the extreme indignation he displays when he finds it ignored. For he is always convinced that he knows which way the hunted fox has gone, when the field and huntsman remain in ignorance as to its whereabouts. The grumbling bore is fortunate in one respect. He entertains a remarkably good opinion of himself, which nothing can shake.

As to arguing with him—it is perfectly useless. Just so much waste of breath, for he is essentially an obstinate man, and a narrow-minded one to boot. What *he* thinks, others must think, therefore discussion is to be avoided, since he will talk his opponent's head off without giving him a chance to put in the most modest little word.

This is what renders his society so wearisome and uninteresting. Most people very naturally like to have their say and when they have listened patiently to somebody else's, feel that they are more or less entitled to express an opinion. But our friend prosed and grumbled on without intermission, steadily adhering to his own pet subjects of conversation and entirely ignoring yours. Such egotism is disgusting and makes the heart contract with a sense of personal injury.

After he has told you all the ins and outs of his constitution, his

stable and domestic experiences, it would be a relief to mention your own, but when you enter into detail he hardly listens. This conduct is both provoking and irritating. The British sense of fair play is outraged. Whenever you meet him the same thing occurs. He is always full of himself, or else of some fresh grievance. A new one is a luxury and he does not forsake it until it is worn quite threadbare. His relations with the Hunt are somewhat strained, as can easily be imagined. He and the master are not exactly on the best of terms. The master is not to blame; for to keep the grumbling bore in a good humour is a task beyond the powers of any ordinary mortal. The greatest diplomatist could not succeed in averting an occasional storm. Those who know our friend intimately, have long since given up the attempt of pleasing him in despair, and declare he is never so happy as when finding fault. Altogether, he is far from being a cheerful companion, and the major portion of his fellow-sportsmen act with considerable discretion in giving him a wide berth, and in confining themselves to meteorological platitudes when forced for civility's sake to converse.

But the bore is an extremely dense individual, and being endowed by nature with a very thick skin does not notice fine shades of manner, or perceive when his absence is more desirable than his company. His want of sensitiveness often stands him in good stead, for not unfrequently he meets with a rebuff, which, however, he disdains to accept as such.

New-comers are to be pitied; for as a rule they fall a prey to him just like so many flies to a spider. It takes them some little time to find him out, and until that event occurs, they listen with a certain deference to his long tirades against the Hunt, the country, the master and the Hunt servants. They are even somewhat impressed at first by criticisms which seem to imply superior knowledge on the part of the critic, and look up to him as an enlightened sportsman whose oracular utterances command attention.

But this stage of hero-worship soon passes, and before long they see their quondam friend revealed in his true light. Stripped of all glamour, he appears as an inveterate grumbler and an unmitigated bore. A person to be shunned and avoided, and strongly discouraged whenever an outbreak of garrulity seems imminent.

"By Jove! here he comes," they exclaim. "For Heaven's sake, let's escape whilst there is still time." And so saying they stick spurs into their horses and gallop off as hard as they can lay legs to the ground, or else dodge round the nearest covert, or seek refuge in its muddy rides. Anywhere to avoid the inveterate grumbler, who ambles on ready to pounce upon the first victim who unwarily crosses his path.

He does not care one jot about the individual. All he wants is some target against which to rattle the small shot of his tongue.

For he dearly loves the sound of it. As for sense, humour, interest, they are utterly deficient. He strings a quantity of words together, which come dribbling out in an uninterrupted flow like water from a spout, but the stream is thin. He, however, is charmed with the result, and it never strikes him that his listener is not equally so.

For the bore is as egotistical as he is tiresome, and although there are a few people kind enough to sacrifice themselves for his benefit and who pretend to listen to his remarks, the majority of men and women are profoundly wearied by them.

For to bore modern society is the one fault most difficult to forgive, in spite of its commonness. Instinctively our spirits rise up in arms against the man whose long, prosy stories almost send us to sleep and are utterly destitute of point; stories that go rambling on for ever and ever. Dulness is an unpardonable sin, and even those who may not happen to be bright and witty themselves can appreciate these excellent qualities in others.

For humour is the salt of life. Without it, the world would be but a sorry place to dwell in. We like what is cheerful and pleasant, and whether in the hunting field or anywhere else our term on earth is too short to encourage the bores and grumblers. We cannot beguile ourselves into the belief that they are good fellows, when half-an-hour's conversation with them gives us a regular fit of the blues and makes us look at everything through a pair of black spectacles. Even if our particular Hunt *has* faults, we do not always want to hear them dinned into our ears, and above all we object to being bored.

The process is one against which human nature rises up in revolt.

3.—THE MAN WHO HAS LOST HIS NERVE.

NERVE and scent are two things equally indefinable. They are here to-day and gone to-morrow. No one knows the exact conditions on which they depend; though since the first institution of hunting, many have sought to ascertain what qualities of temperament and weather are essential to their existence. Up till now, the mystery remains a mystery, and the problem seems as far off solution as ever.

Sometimes on the most promising-looking of mornings a fox won't run a yard, turning and twisting in every direction in covert, and completely baffling his pursuers. He may be a strong old patriarch, fit to show his white-tagged brush to the whole field. But no! he declines to do anything of the sort and is viciously sworn at as an unenterprising brute. On other occasions, when, as far as it is possible to judge, the conditions do not appear nearly so favourable—when it blows a perfect hurricane, accompanied by furious storms of sleet and snow, the little red rover literally revels

in a scamper, stoutly defies the elements and leads those who have been bold enough to face them a pretty dance.

As for men, they are as deceptive as foxes every bit. A fine physique has nothing to do with nerve—at least it fails to insure its presence. You see some great, big, healthy man with rosy cheeks, the limbs of a giant, and the digestion of an ostrich, and you say to yourself, "Fortunate mortal! Surely he does not know the meaning of the word fear." But you are mistaken. He clings soberly to the roads and gates, and rarely jumps except under disagreeably high pressure. In short he objects to the process and considers it far too dangerous to be pleasant. He hunts to enjoy himself and not to commit suicide in a delicate fashion which shall afford his friends no apprehensions as to the state of his immortal soul. It is wiser policy to take care of that valuable organ on earth. So reasons the giant. On the other hand some long, lank, frail-looking individual, whose appearance certainly leads you to suppose that he has already one foot in the grave, goes like a demon, and repeatedly charges impossible fences which no living horse can clear. This fact creates but few misgivings. He is prepared every day he goes out to take innumerable falls and regards anything under half-a-dozen as quite an insignificant number, not worth talking about. For a time he goes on gaily; tumbling and picking himself up, being reprimanded by the master for constantly over-riding and periodically killing his hounds, and eliciting divided abuse, condemnation and praise from the field in general. One calls him a fool, another pronounces him a "d——d young idiot," and a third has no words to express his admiration for such magnificent courage. The majority, however, are convinced he is a madman and take a spiteful delight in prophesying that he will soon come to what they call his bearings. This generally means a desire to see him "funk" like themselves and no longer put them to shame by his gallant deeds. The truth is, jealousy and blame are curiously allied in the minds of most people. A jealous person will generally remark severely on the doings of those he professes to despise, but in reality envies; whilst an indifferent one holds his tongue and is not put out because so-and-so has the audacity to jump right under his nose, when personally he may have the desire but not the courage to follow his example. Oddly enough, in most instances, the predictions of the malicious prove correct. Our friend *does* come to his bearings—that is to say, after riding for a time as if he bore a charmed life, the day arrives when he gets a nasty fall and hurts himself badly. He has often hurt himself before, but always slightly. On the present occasion his horse rolls heavily over him, struggles, plunges, and leaves him lying on the ground with a broken leg and several severe contusions. He suffers agonies on the homeward drive. The fly is jolty, its springs deficient and every yard of the road seems patched with stones, which increase

his pain a thousand-fold. He grows dizzy and once or twice is on the point of fainting.

Three months elapse before he is sufficiently recovered to take the saddle again. During the long weary weeks which he has been forced to spend in bed or lying full length on the sofa, his memory is haunted by the shock, the fall, and those brief but agonizing moments, when the horse rolled backwards and forwards over him and he fully expected to be killed. Impossible to wipe out the recollection. It is photographed on his brain in dark, unlovely colours, and although he would give all the world to get rid of the disagreeable impression, stamped so strongly on his mind, he can't.

The season is drawing to a close when he reappears in the hunting field, looking frightfully pale, fragile and emaciated. Every one pities him and he has a most legitimate excuse for merely hacking about and not riding as of yore. He comes out on a quiet cob expressly purchased for the purpose—a creature guaranteed not to cock its ears, whisk its tail or even blink its eye uncomfortably. Jogging sedately along the roads, or—as he gets better—popping over an occasional gap, our invalid is much astonished to find what a relief it is to be on the sick list and not expected to perform feats of valour. He feels as if a load had been removed from his shoulders, leaving him a free man, who no longer, every time he goes out hunting, is weighted by a crushing sense of obligation. For he it known, reputation is not the glittering jewel that it seems. It has its drawbacks in the hunting field as everywhere else, since fame is easier to acquire in the first instance than to sustain. A single gallant action is frequently sufficient to bring renown, but it entails a long series of efforts to prevent that action from being forgotten. Therefore a hard-rider must continually be on his mettle. There is no greater mistake than thinking, "I can rest on my laurels." Other people win fresh ones, and yours soon become old and faded if you do not exert yourself.

Meanwhile our poor young friend is conscious of a subtle alteration in his mental condition. He begins to find himself looking critically at the fences, examining their top-binders, and for the first time thinking how uncommonly wide and ugly the ditches appear. Luckily no one, not even his bosom friends, are aware of the daily increasing dread of danger growing up within his breast, like some foul and poisonous fungus. The season drags to an end, as far as he is concerned, and his fame remains untarnished. The bubble is expanding, but has not yet burst. His comrades expect nothing from him. They unite in saying, "Poor fellow! how ill he looks. He really ought not to come out hunting. If he'd only give his leg a chance, it would be all right for next season."

Alas! throughout the summer that unfortunate downfall still lingers in his thoughts. The impression, though not so acute,

refuses to fade. It rests in the background of his mind, rising to the surface whenever matters equine are discussed. Often at night he dreams of four brown heels flourishing before his eyes, and in fancy feels once more that sleek but heavy body pinning him to the ground, causing a strangely dead sensation to creep up his right leg. Nevertheless, when winter approaches, the injured limb has grown perfectly well, and he repairs as usual to his accustomed hunting quarters, trying to deceive himself into the belief that he is very keen. On the way down the country seems to him desperately blind—much more so than in ordinary seasons. The very look of it is enough to frighten one, but the strong will that in years past has carried him over so many formidable fences now resolves to keep his fears secret. Unhappy man! In spite of good resolutions he cannot succeed altogether in acting up to them.

Before long it begins to be whispered amongst his former companions of the chase—those gallant and select spirits who give prestige to every hunt—that Z—— is not going quite so hard as usual. The first man states the fact with considerable hesitation. He feels that it is equivalent to taking Z——'s character away—a kind of public confession that he has dropped from grace and retreated into the despised ranks of "*the mob!*" But the answer comes decisive from half-a-dozen pairs of stern, masculine lips. "Oh! yes, we've noticed it. We've noticed it for some time. Didn't you remark how he shirked that big bottom on the opening day, when we ran as fast as hounds could race from Crosstrees to Lockthorpe? There was no excuse. Poor Z——, I'm afraid he's settled." This half-mournfully, half-complacently. They exult in the thought that they themselves remain *unsettled*, yet inwardly wonder when their turn will come, and whether it will produce the same result.

In process of time rumours of his failing nerve reach Z——'s ears. He is frightfully annoyed by them, little guessing that they are already spread amongst all the field. Their effect is to make him feel under a cloud and to goad him to renewed exertion. For the next week or ten days he puts on a tremendous spurt, and almost rides up to his old form. But just when his nerve seems really about to improve he gets another spill, which, although unattended by any evil consequences, once more wakes the old fears into life. He cannot help it. He knows they are ridiculous, unworthy indeed of a man, but still they gain the ascendancy. Struggle as he may he fails to conquer them. They fasten on him like a tormenting creditor appearing at the most inconvenient moment.

Meanwhile his stud-groom, from whom he is particularly anxious to conceal any symptoms of degeneracy, is perfectly aware of what is taking place. One after another Z—— brings the old favourite hunters home that he has ridden for years, with the same pitiful tale. They pull, they refuse; they refuse, they pull. There is no

longer any satisfaction to be derived from them. Past virtues are swallowed up by present shortcomings, and all their good points have disappeared.

The pride of Z——'s stable is a thoroughbred chestnut mare, a beauty to look at, and perfect in every respect, at least so her master has always declared until now. He has ridden her for four seasons and, marvellous to relate, she has never put him down through her own fault. She is an extraordinary fencer, big and bold, who does not know what it is to turn her head, and her only fault when hounds run hard is a very pardonable one. She must and will be with them. This year Z—— affirms that she pulls his arms off. The fact is, he is afraid to let her go.

"It's very odd, Wilkinson," he says to his head man in tones of confidential injury, "but I can't hold Queen Bee. I don't know what's come to her. She's a different animal altogether from what she was in the early part of last season."

"Indeed, sir," responds Wilkinson diplomatically. "I'm sorry to hear that, for the mare is fit and well."

He is a man of tact, and, making a pretty shrewd guess at what is amiss, smothers a smile. Z—— is a kind master, and he has a comfortable berth.

"I tell you, Wilkinson," continues Z—— unsuspectingly, "that it's an infernally unpleasant thing going out hunting and feeling yourself being run away with at every fence."

"No doubt it is, sir. The mare hasn't done much work as yet, and perhaps she's a bit above herself. We must send her out oftener, that's all. You can ride her second 'oss on Thursday if you like. She'll have settled down by then."

"Yes, I think I will," says Z——. "After all, there's no pleasure in riding a pulling, tearing brute who never leaves you alone."

"How would it be to put a stronger bit on her, sir?" suggests Wilkinson in his most respectful and sympathetic manner.

Z—— catches at the idea.

"By all means," he replies. "I believe a stronger bit would just make all the difference."

So the next time the mare goes out orders are issued to this effect. When the day arrives, after many inward struggles, Z—— decides to ride as first horse an animal lent him on trial by a neighbouring dealer; his intention being to mount Queen Bee as soon as she has quieted down a bit. Owing to a mistake on the part of the mare's strapper, she is sent to the meet with her ordinary bridle, whilst about half a ton of steel is placed in the mouth of the stranger. Fortunately Z—— knows nothing of this, and when he gets on the mare, being under the impression that she is restrained by a powerful lever against which she finds it impossible to pull, allows her to stride along at her will, with the result of holding her perfectly easily.

"Well, sir; how have you got on?" inquires Wilkinson curiously when his master comes riding in to the stable yard.

"First rate. I never was better carried in my life. Queen Bee is quite in her old form."

"Come, that's all right," answers the gratified Wilkinson, going to the mare's head while Z—— dismounts.

In the twinkling of an eye he perceives that his orders have not been carried out regarding the bit. He deserves great credit, for, in this delicate situation, he has the extreme good sense to refrain from mentioning the circumstance.

"Did she pull you at all, sir?" he asks, looking as sober as a judge.

"No, not an ounce. Remember, Wilkinson, always to put that bit on to Queen Bee in future. It suits her down to the ground."

"Yes, sir," says Wilkinson; but as his master walks away he shakes his head and looks after him with a regretful sigh. "Ah!" he soliloquizes, "I've had my suspicions for a long time, but now the whole thing is as clear as the nose on one's face. The mare's no more in fault nor me. What we wants this season is what we had a little too much of afore the guv'nor got that unlucky spill and broke his leg. He's a-losing of his nerve, more's the pity—more's the pity, for at one time a gallanter gentleman never went out hunting, though every now and again he *was* a little too rough on his 'osses." So saying Wilkinson delivered the beautiful Queen Bee to her particular strapper, whilst he hurried off to personally superintend the mixing of her gruel.

Another person who quickly learns poor Z——'s secret is the dealer with whom he is accustomed to deal. In olden days never was a customer so easy to satisfy. If only horses could gallop Z—— soon taught them to jump. It was as if he infused into their hearts something of his own gallant spirit. But now it is almost impossible to suit him. He has grown fastidious to a degree. The real truth is, he hardly knows what he wants, or rather he wants so much that no single animal can combine all the requisite qualities. It must gallop, it must jump, it must stay, be smooth in its paces, have perfect manners, neither kick, buck, nor do anything disagreeable, whilst its age shall not be less than five or more than seven.

Meanwhile poor Z—— has such a nervous horror of riding a new horse, that he will not try one sufficiently to discover its merits. On the other hand, he grows sharper and sharper at finding out all *démerits*. If the animal goes boldly at his fences, he calls him a rushing, tearing brute; if after being pulled up, he declines to jump, Z—— declares he is a rank refuser, and if the steady-going beast is so docile as to take no notice of the electric current of fear, communicated from his rider's hands to the corners of his sensitive mouth, he is dubbed either a sluggard or a cur. In short, Z—— wants a wonder. A few exist, but they are very hard to find, and

even money cannot purchase them the very moment they are wanted.

Z—— requires his ideal hunter to be fleet as the wind, yet not to pull an ounce; bold as a lion, yet to go lamb-like at his fences, and to possess a courageous and generous nature, which, however, indulges in no inconvenient light-heartedness. Where is such a horse to be found? Z—— chops and changes, with the result that he outwears the dealer's patience, and at the end is decidedly worse off, both in money and horseflesh, than he was at the beginning. His friendly dealer does his best to please him. No efforts are wanting on his part, for Z—— has not only been a good customer for many years, but also a first-rate advertisement. Indirectly he has put many hundred pounds into his pocket. He begins by sending him sound fresh young horses of the class he has bought up till now. They certainly require a little making, but hitherto Z—— has never failed to turn them into brilliant hunters. Next, he tries him with something older and steadier, without giving any greater satisfaction; and at last, in despair, falls back upon a regular old gentleman's quadruped, strong, plain, underbred, but guaranteed absolutely sober of conduct. A year ago Z—— would not have had such a hippopotamus at a gift. He might have called him an ornament to an omnibus, but certainly not to the hunting field. Now he declares him to be a really comfortable mount, and eventually purchases old Sobersides for a sum about three times his worth.

So Z—— goes on from bad to worse. Every year his nerve becomes shakier, until at last he almost gives up jumping altogether. The process is subtle, but he traces its commencement to that disastrous fall, which to this day he has never forgotten. Ten years from the time he first entered the county and took field, master, huntsman by storm, he is reduced to the necessity of being accompanied by a groom, whose duty it is to precede his master over every gap, and prove to him by ocular demonstration that it contains no lurking danger.

♣ Shall we give a final view of poor Z——?

One day, when hounds were running very hard, he came across a diminutive ditch. The fence had almost completely disappeared owing to the number of horses which had passed over it. Z—— happened to be at the very tail of an attenuated line of sportsmen, for the pace was great, and many steeds had succumbed to it.

"Hey!" he called out to his groom, who was a little behind, "you go first, and give me a lead."

The man did as desired, and waited for his master to follow. Whereupon Z—— took a tremendous pull at the reins, leant timorously forward in the saddle, hunched his shoulders, rounded his back, and in fear and trembling set his horse at the gap. That sagacious animal, however, probably possessing a delicate perception of his rider's frame of mind, refused. Z—— pretended to

whack him—he was in much too great a fright to do so really—but Sobersides opposed the castigation, light as it was, with dogged obstinacy. The fact was, Z—— had got hold of him so tight by the head, that he could not see where he was going. Then Z—— vented his wrath upon the human animal. It was considerably safer, and did not expose him to the risk of being unseated.

“Here, you d—d fool,” he exclaimed irritably to his groom, “what’s the good of standing there grinning, just as if there were anything to grin at. Come, jump back again, and get on this brute of mine, whilst I mount Patrician.”

The man immediately obeyed orders, and lo ! to Z——’s surprise, Sobersides popped over the gap without demur.

But now, what had come to Patrician ? The horse seemed to have taken leave of his senses, for he proved even more refractory than Sobersides. He not only firmly declined to jump, but got up on his hind legs and showed the most abominable temper. It was more than Z—— could stand. Every moment he thought he should be crushed to death. At the first lull, he slipped from the saddle in a desperate hurry.

“What the devil is the matter with the brute ?” he asked indignantly of the groom, who promptly rejoined his master.

“I think if you would give ’im ’is ’ead, sir,” suggested the man. “’Ee’s a ’oss as likes to go very free at his fences.”

“Give him his head ! What do you mean ? He might have jumped over and over again had he liked. Do you suppose I don’t know when a horse shows temper ? To-morrow morning he shall be packed off to the place he came from.”

“It’s a’most a pity, sir. ’Ee’s a good ’oss, a very good ’oss. If you’d try ’im again——”

“Try him again. Not I. Not for ten thousand pounds. I’ve had enough of the beast. The fact is, he ain’t my sort.”

Whether our friend Z—— ever succeeded in getting over that gap, history does not tell, but when his mortified companion reached home, he lost no time in communicating the humiliating tale to Wilkinson.

That worthy pursed up his lips.

“Look here, John,” he said, “don’t you put yourself about. It isn’t your fault, or Patrician’s either, we all know that. He’s as good a hunter as ever looked through a bridle, but when a gentleman ’as lost his nerve as completely as our guvnor, why, then, in my hopinion, it’s time for him to give up hunting. It’s first this one wrong, then that, until I declare a man has no pride left in his ’osses. I’m a plain, ’ard-working fellow, but if I could present my master with ten pound worth of nerve-powder, why, I’d do it to-morrow.”

And now the question comes, why does courage evaporate with some, whilst others may hunt and tumble to the end of a long life, and never lose their nerve ?

Z—— is not to be sneered at. He was not responsible for the change that took place within him, and for a long time valiantly battled with his fears. That eventually he succumbed to them was his misfortune rather than his fault. No “funkstick” he, from birth, yet in some mysterious fashion a single nasty accident threw his whole nervous system out of gear. The inquiring mind cries out, “Why, why? Oh! give me the reason?”

But answer there is none. Only we agree with Wilkinson, that when a man has lost his nerve so completely as Z——, it is wiser for him to retire from the chase. There is no greater mistake than letting what ought to be pleasure degenerate into pain, and submitting to the yoke, simply through force of habit. Say boldly, “My nerve is gone. I’m giving up hunting,” and nobody will care in the least. There are always plenty to take your place.

THE END.

OH, TO BE A MAN!

By HUGH COLEMAN DAVIDSON,

AUTHOR OF "THE GREEN HILLS BY THE SEA."

MISS HANNAH STEPTOE was a prim little old maid, with a flat, round ruddy face and dark brown hair neatly fastened behind in a little knot. She invariably dressed in grey silk or satin, wore a gold brooch containing a lock of white hair, and was very particular about her caps—curious compounds of ribbon and muslin and lace, which varied from the severe turban in the morning to the last new fashion from Paris in the evening. These caps wrought a remarkable change in her appearance; she seemed to grow younger as the day advanced, so that the question of her age was often debated by the gossiping inhabitants of Dullish, the small and dreary watering-place in which she had made her home.

She lived with a confidential old servant in a little cottage facing a triangular green. Roses were carefully trailed over the wooden porch; the path through the tiny garden was bordered with white pebbles; the flower-beds were cut with mathematical precision; in short, the outside of the cottage clearly indicated the orderly habits that prevailed within. Nothing ever went wrong there. Doors opened and shut without creaking; hot mutton punctually at one o'clock on Sundays was followed by cold mutton punctually at one o'clock on Mondays; the muffins were done to a turn on Thursdays, when a few friends always came to afternoon tea; habit had worn for itself deep grooves, and everything ran smoothly and undeviatingly along them.

When any Sunday-school teacher wanted a model of common-place propriety for the example of her pupils, she was sure to select Miss Hannah Steptoe. No one would have dreamed of suspecting the slightest tinge of romance in this quiet little lady.

And yet, so inconsistent is human nature, she had set her affections upon a man much younger than herself, while her life was haunted by the dark desire to see the world as it really is, and not as it was presented to her and her set of highly respectable friends, all of whom stood upon the neat and narrow platform of conventionality and never ventured to look over the edge. She

longed to do what they dared not. The placid smile that sometimes lighted up her face, as she sat in the arm-chair before the fire and watched her cat sleeping on the hearthrug, was caused, not by a pleasant retrospect which affords enjoyment to so many old ladies, but by a fanciful picture of her friends' feelings as they believed her plunging into some wild extravagance.

Certain persons of undoubted piety, John Wesley among them, are said to have been beset by a horrible and almost irresistible temptation to do something outrageous. The temptation that beset Miss Steptoe was somewhat similar in degree, though different in kind. "Oh, to be a man!" was the thought that continually rose to her lips but never escaped them. It was more than feminine curiosity; it was almost a mania with her, cleverly as she concealed it. Perhaps, after all, the very stiffness of manner and habit, which was supposed to be her leading characteristic, was but an extreme precaution against her besetting temptation.

"Oh, to be a man!" The thought was no sooner driven from her mind than it was back again, often bursting upon her at the most incongruous times, when she was making a pudding or knitting a stocking. But the day came when, with dazzled eyes, she saw a way to the attainment of a wish which she had always regarded as unattainable.

Late one autumn there arrived in Dullish a mesmerist, who called himself Professor Sobrinski. In spite of his name he spoke English with a very good accent. He was a tall, thin, sallow-faced man with an enormous nose and cold snake-like eyes. Possessed of a fund of grim humour he regarded human nature as a plaything, and was never so pleased as when trying the effect of a round block in a square hole. It was doubtless this propensity that had led him to adopt mesmerism as a means of livelihood.

A successful *séance* in the town hall brought Professor Sobrinski into notice. At first his vocation as a public performer—a sort of play-actor, in fact—was decidedly against him, but somebody started the story that he was a Polish count, whereupon he became quite the rage in Dullish. He was invited to dinners, teas and suppers, and at all of them was expected to give illustrations of his art gratuitously. This he did, revenging himself by making fools of his host and hostess.

Among the professor's warmest admirers was Miss Hannah Steptoe. In the crowd that used to gather round him she always occupied a prominent place; her prim little figure rigid, her daintily-attired head held on one side as she hung upon his every word. She had conceived a most fantastic idea of the powers of mesmerism. By its aid, it seemed to her, the transmigration of souls was brought within the range of possibility, if not of accomplished facts. Glowing with excitement, she hatched a little plot based upon this conclusion. She invited to a cosy afternoon tea a few friends, including the professor and Captain

Henniker, a tall, handsome, indolent man with a big moustache, which had captivated all the young ladies in Dullish—and Miss Hannah Steptoe. But it was not solely the moustache that had wrought the mischief in her case. The captain, in spite of his drawling tones, and eyes which were seldom really open, was reputed to have seen more of the world than most people of double the age. This alone would be quite enough to explain her secret admiration of him.

The preparations for her entertainment were prodigious. Never was there such a baking of cakes and toasting of muffins and washing of quaint little cups and saucers. The kettle was unusually tedious, and when the tea was made the solemn servant terrified her mistress with the suggestion that the water had never boiled after all. With awed faces they peered into the splendid silver teapot, which was reserved for state occasions, and when they beheld several leaves floating on the surface, their expressions were most tragic.

"Martha, this is too dreadful," exclaimed Miss Steptoe, with uplifted hands.

"Yes, ma'am, it is," replied Martha. "I've never known the like happen in our house before—no, never."

It was some time before Miss Steptoe recovered from the shock. Her domestic duties imposed such a strain upon her that she almost forgot the excitement of her plot. But when, attired in her best grey silk and daintiest cap, she sat down to await the coming of her guests she was all a tremble.

Her manner, when receiving them, was marked by extreme nervousness, but no one, looking at that prim little lady, would have attributed the cause to anything more extraordinary than a catastrophe in the kitchen. When she had poured out the tea and Martha had handed round the cakes and muffins and retired, she lost no time in coming to the point.

"Wouldn't it be very nice and interesting, you know, Professor Sobrinski," she said to that distinguished foreigner, whose big nose, hovering over his cup, resembled the beak of a bird, "to carry mesmerism a little further than you do?"

A breathless silence fell upon all, for the professor was about to speak. Every eye was eagerly bent upon him as he set down his cup. The only person who saw any humour in the situation was himself, and he was too clever to show it.

"In what way?" he asked.

"Well," replied Miss Steptoe, "your subjects can't resist the power of your will, can they?"

"No, Miss Steptoe."

"You can make them do precisely what you like. You can even separate soul from body."

"Just so," assented the professor.

"Then why not make somebody's spirit enter somebody else's

body? A sort of temporary exchange, you know, and then each would have the thoughts and feelings of the other. Wouldn't such an experiment tend to more brotherly love? I mean, by enabling us to see things from different standpoints."

"No doubt," said the professor smiling, though the glitter in his eyes was anything but pleasant. "Upon whom, Miss Steptoe, do you wish me to experiment?"

As she glanced round the silent circle gathered before the fire, there was a very general shrinking. The ladies cowered behind their tea-cups, and several of the gentlemen standing in the background were mean enough to hide behind their neighbours.

"Well," said Miss Steptoe with resignation, "if it will serve the interests of science, I don't mind offering myself."

By this time the ladies were thoroughly frightened, and several began to remonstrate. But Professor Sobrinski took no notice of them.

"Who else?" he asked.

"Captain Henniker, won't you?" timidly said Miss Steptoe, after a pause. "A soldier oughtn't to be afraid, you know. Won't you join me in the sacred cause of science?"

"With pleasure," he drawled, bowing from a chair opposite. "Only too happy to oblige a lady. But no larks, professor! You must let me get back to myself, or it might be awkward for Miss Steptoe. I wouldn't inconvenience her for the world."

"My experiments never fail," said the professor; "pray let us begin at once."

He proceeded in the usual way, making each of his subjects gaze fixedly at a coin held in such a position as to throw a strain upon the eyes. The spectators watched the operation with some curiosity and no little trepidation, not a word being spoken by any of them. It was the professor, and not his subjects, who riveted their attention. There was a strange fascination about his glittering eyes, and as the flickering firelight fell upon his tall figure and sallow birdlike face and hovering hands, he reminded many of a vulture.

Captain Henniker, though at first a trifle restive, eventually fell under the magician's spell. Miss Steptoe succumbed at once. When Professor Sobrinski examined their eyes, he found that both his subjects were thoroughly under the mesmeric influence. Then he smiled grimly, just as he had smiled before.

"So far, so good," he said; "now for the next stage." He fluttered his fingers in front of Captain Henniker. "Remember you are Miss Steptoe." He turned and repeated the gesture before her. "And you are Captain Henniker."

With a singularly sly expression she looked up at him and said, "No larks, professor."

The gentlemen fairly shrieked with laughter, the speech was so unexpected. Their merriment was increased by the ridiculous

appearance of Captain Henniker. With his hands folded over his knees, he wore an air of mild reproof, just such an air as Miss Steptoe would ordinarily have worn under the same circumstances.

All this time she had been fidgeting in her chair. As nobody spoke, all waiting for what was coming next, she rose impatiently, saying:

"You people are so uncommonly dull that I really can't stand this any longer—I'm off."

"Where to?" asked Professor Sobrinski, the only one who was able to speak.

"For a spree. Bother these old maids! they are enough to drive one crazy."

Her words threw a sudden stiffness into the attitudes of the ladies present. They positively glared after her, as, with her little nose high in the air, she walked to the door.

Captain Henniker almost dropped from his seat, he was so dismayed. Like her, he was only obeying an irresistible power, for he had full possession of his own identity. He knew what an ass he was making of himself, but he could not act otherwise, hard though he tried to do so. And now that Miss Steptoe was going out he was filled with horror, for how in her absence could he regain control over himself? Yet her womanly bashfulness and other characteristics having been impressed upon him, he could not utter one word to stop her. "There she goes with my spirit," he said to himself, shuddering. And when the door closed upon her, this careless soldier with the big moustache actually began to weep.

Miss Steptoe went upstairs to her room and, with the speed and inattention of a man, put on her mantle and bonnet. There was no lingering at the glass, no searching for stray ribbons, no final pluming of feathers. In a wonderfully short space of time she was out of the house and on her way to the Parade.

Mr. Macnish, a pompous little man, who would have been startled to learn that he was a butt for every joker in Dullish, happened to be swaggering along in front of her. She stepped up to him and slapped him on the back.

"Well, old chappie, where are you off to?" demanded this astonishing little lady.

When Mr. Macnish recognized Miss Steptoe he nearly had an apoplectic fit.

"Oh, you wag!" she exclaimed, pointing at him.

"Good gracious!" gasped Mr. Macnish, falling back in alarm.

"Ta-ta," laughed Miss Steptoe, "I'm bound for the Parade. You are not going my way, I suppose?"

Mr. Macnish, with very shaky knees, stood staring after her. "The woman's mad," he said at last. "There can be no doubt about it." Then he turned and made for her cottage as fast as his legs could carry him.

Here another surprise awaited him. Martha, who did not know

that her mistress had gone out, told him there were a number of visitors in the drawing-room, should she show him in? "Yes," he replied in bewilderment; and entered, peering about like a traveller arrived at dead of night in a strange land. He found Professor Sobrinski speaking to an entranced audience, but his arrival caused a general flutter. His extraordinary story created much amusement, and while the mystery was being explained to him there was a good deal of laughter.

"Poor thing," exclaimed Mr. Macnish, "she shouldn't have been allowed out; I call it an abominable practical joke."

"My good sir," said Professor Sobrinski, "you speak too fast. It was Miss Steptoe herself who proposed the experiment. She has sacrificed herself in the cause of science."

"Science be hanged," cried Mr. Macnish, "I am going after her." Captain Henniker rose eagerly.

"Allow me," he said. "I ought to have kept near her. I feel dreadfully ill apart from her. If you will all be good enough to excuse me, I will go after her." He looked doubtfully at Professor Sobrinski.

"You may go," said the professor.

Captain Henniker bowed and left the room. He felt obliged to proceed slowly and sedately, eager as he was to regain the society of Miss Steptoe. Besides his anxiety to recover that part of himself with which he believed she had walked off, her spirit was working within him, and while he shrank from the contemplated act, he was irresistibly impelled to make a declaration of love. "What a dolt I am," he kept saying to himself as he went towards the Parade; "I don't care a straw about the old frump, and yet—I love you to distraction, my darling. There, was there ever such a horrible position! The words will come out, but they are not my words."

Grassy banks, thinly planted with shrubs, sloped down to the Parade, a converted park by the side of the sea. A few lamps twinkled along the edge of the beach; they had just been lighted when Captain Henniker arrived. The breeze being chilly he was surprised to see a good many people walking about, while a few occupied seats near the little circular erection where the band played in the evening. In the distance was a prim little figure sauntering along as if the whole place belonged to her. She stopped and spoke to nearly everybody she met, and as she passed on again they gazed after her in speechless amusement. Miss Hannah Steptoe they knew; but who was this eccentric person who assumed her guise and then startled them with the most extraordinary speeches and gestures? They gathered in groups and pointed after her. There was quite a commotion upon the Parade.

If there was one thing more than another that Captain Henniker abhorred it was being mixed up in a scene. He shuddered at the

very idea of making himself ridiculous, and yet he went after Miss Steptoe, and, though struggling against what he was compelled to do, entered into conversation with her, and walked by her side. The curious spectator observed that she dropped her flippant manner at once, but they did not know what had caused the change. They could not help, however, being struck with Captain Henniker's respectful attitude.

"I very much wanted to see you alone," he said, "so I have taken the liberty of following you. You can guess what I am going to say, can't you?"

"How should I?"

"Oh, my darling, how I love you! You know it, don't you? You have known it all along. Do you love me?"

"I do," she answered softly.

"Then," cried this miserable puppet, "I am the happiest man in the world."

He stretched out his arms towards her. As he did so, a peal of laughter reached his ears, and proved stronger than the spell. He started back, shivering.

"This place is frightfully public," he said; "let us get away from it."

A pompous little man came tearing along the Parade. He waved his stick, and was evidently in a tremendous passion. It was Mr. Macnish.

"Captain Henniker," he cried, "you ought to be ashamed of yourself. You are making Miss Steptoe the talk of the whole town."

"Not me," stammered Captain Henniker.

"But you are, sir. Pray," said Mr. Macnish, turning to Miss Steptoe, "let me see you home. The air is keen here."

To Captain Henniker's surprise, she went quite meekly. She did not utter a word of remonstrance; she did not even look back. He had yet much to learn of Professor Sobrinski's power over his subjects.

When Captain Henniker awoke next morning he was painfully conscious of what had happened on the previous day. There could be no doubt he was in a very awkward predicament, and he could see no way out of it. In despair he sent his servant to ask his friend and confidant, Leonard Haughton, to come to breakfast. Haughton accepted the invitation, but was rather late in arriving.

"I say, old boy," he began, "you look precious seedy. Did Miss Steptoe's tea disagree with you?"

"I hate a fool," said Captain Henniker testily. "Sit down and help yourself."

"Bilious, eh?" said Haughton with a smile. "Well, perhaps it's not to be wondered at. Thank goodness, my appetite will make amends for yours."

He helped himself largely, and for a time breakfast proceeded

in silence; but presently Captain Henniker threw down his knife and fork, and said:

"Look here, Leonard, I'm in a most frightful mess. It makes my hair stand on end when I think of it. How I can have been such a fool I can't conceive. I allowed that viper Sobrinski to mesmerise me, and then I became Miss Steptoe and she became me. Do you follow me?"

"Not exactly," answered Haughton drily. "But go on."

"Well, Miss Steptoe—that was me, you know—walked off to the Parade, and left me—that was Miss Steptoe—behind, and after a while, I—or, rather, Miss Steptoe—followed her—that was me. It sounds funny, doesn't it?"

"Very."

"Then I, like an ass—though I couldn't help it—proposed to Miss Steptoe. But, you understand, it was really Miss Steptoe who proposed."

"In other words, Miss Steptoe proposed to herself."

"Nonsense, man. I'll put it more plainly for you. The spirit of Miss Steptoe in my body proposed to my spirit in her body."

"Was the spirit whisky or gin? Upon my word, Henniker, you are not sober yet. Who proposed to whom?"

"That is just what I can't make out. It seemed as if I was proposing to her, but it was she who proposed to me. How do I stand? That is what I want you to tell me."

"Give it up," answered Haughton. "Never was good at riddles."

"Do be sensible for a moment. Am I bound by the proposal?"

"I should say you were. When a fellow takes too much—shall we call it tea?—over-night, he must expect to answer for it in the morning."

"Then," said Captain Henniker desperately, "the proposal must be repeated by me. Say good-bye to your old friend, Leonard. I feel as if I should cut my throat."

That afternoon he called at Miss Steptoe's cottage, in order to ratify what had occurred between them. It was, he considered, the only honourable course open to him, and therefore he had resolved to take it, though the spell itself had ceased to operate. It seemed as if its hateful effects were to last a lifetime, compelling him to do what he detested, and leaving him no more control over his own destiny than is possessed by chaff driven by the wind.

Martha opened the door to him. With a face brimful of importance, she said, before he had time to speak:

"Have you heard the news, Captain Henniker?"

"News!" he gasped, fearing that he knew it only too well.

"Miss Steptoe is engaged to Mr. Macnish."

He scarcely knew how he made his escape; he was at once so astonished and so delighted. It was not until afterwards, when

he was able to think more clearly, that a slight feeling of soreness entered his mind. It was rather humiliating to be rejected in favour of Mr. Macnish. He could not conceive how it had happened. Any woman could have told him. But Captain Henniker thought it prudent not to ask.

A DAY OF ADVENTURE ON THE NILE.

By MRS. BLOOD.

IN the spring of the year '74, I was descending the Nile in a dahabeeyah, having ascended it a few months previously as far as the Second Cataract at Wady Halfah. In those distant days, Nile travelling was very different to what it is now. Steamers, even those of the ubiquitous and "personally conducting" Mr. Cook, were comparatively few and far between; and one might go many days on the upper reaches of the river without seeing any white faces, except those of one's own party, or any lateen sail except the gigantic one that adorned one's own boat. No time was wasted on introductions in those days. If one was lucky enough to "tie up" anywhere near a European boat, no time was lost in making acquaintance, and the visit was as promptly returned as if the two dahabeeyahs contained the reigning sovereigns of rival countries. It made a pleasant break in the long days of sailing or towing to get a chance of hearing a "white language," and above all perhaps to exchange newspapers and over-read novels; for one very soon gets to the bottom of any supply of books with which one may start on a Nile voyage.

However, to return to those oft-quoted muttons. We were, as I have said, returning down the river, and returning considerably more slowly than we wished, for we had to be, for family reasons, at Cairo by a certain date. But family reasons or any reasons mattered not in the eyes of our Reis and sailors. They were paid by the month, and they therefore desired to keep us as long on the river as they possibly could. No excuse was too meagre for a delay; and the way the Reis and the steersman combined to run the boat on sand-banks was quite remarkable. It really seemed as if we were bound to make a personal experience and survey of every sand-bank in the river! The "stars in their courses," or rather the winds, seemed also to fight against us. Every day the north wind arose in its strength and fought out a sturdy battle, during which our boat had to be tied up against the Nile stream till sundown, when it gradually died away. The nights being calm and windless, the men should then have rowed and profited by the swift current; and so they did, until our lights were put out and every one in bed and asleep. Then the oars would be

silently shipped, the boat made fast to the bank, and the crew, rolled into shapeless bundles in their blankets, would speedily consign themselves to their slumbers, confident that the *Hawaji* were none the wiser.

Altogether it was rather weary work, fighting perpetually against either crew or wind, and sometimes both. We varied the tedium of the enforced idleness of the anchorage during the greater part of the day, by exploring on foot the neighbourhood of our prisons. At that time of year, March or April, it is the only way of seeing anything of the country, for the river has already sunk so far down the high clay banks that one can see nothing from the boat. Between Thebes and Keneh, the part we were going through that March, the country was very rich and beautiful; a great fertile tract of green cultivated land shut in at a considerable distance by the desert and the mountains. There were lovely inclosures of fruit trees, lemon trees, covered with blossom, date palms, dôm palms and prickly pears; and on one occasion we saw a fine vineyard, which is a rare sight in Egypt. Everywhere the *shadoof* was being worked by magnificent bronze figures, or the *sakiyah* by a couple of oxen in charge of a little brown child, who was perched like an imp on the shaft of the great wheel. It is this never-failing system of irrigation which takes the place of the annual inundation when the Nile is falling, and makes what would otherwise be a desert "to blossom like the rose."

One morning we found ourselves, after a calm night, during which we had been tied up as usual, some miles above Keneh; the Reis said four or five. Subsequent events proved the distance to be ten or twelve. We tried to set out, but needless to say the wind had the start of us, and after a vain attempt to battle against it, we gave in and the dahabeeyah was again tied up under the high overhanging bank of clay. These banks, by-the-by, are sometimes exceedingly dangerous neighbours to dahabeeyahs. The current eats out the crumbly, friable earth as the river falls, and occasionally when the top weight is too much, tons of clay may fall without any sort of warning on a dahabeeyah that has been unwise enough to tie up underneath. When the banks retreat slightly and are grassy, there is no danger. Believing the assurance of the Reis as to the distance to Keneh, and not appreciating the prospect of waiting under the clay cliff till the wind abated, we determined to set out in the little boat or *sandal* (a name which must surely be the root of that of the Venetian skiff or *sandolo*) to row to Keneh and from there cross the river to the temple of Denderah on the western bank, and thus utilize our day instead of wasting it in vain imprecations on Boreas. We also hoped that the dahabeeyah would be able to accomplish so short a distance and be at Keneh by the time we had ended our expedition to the temple. But in all this we reckoned without our host, for after battling for about twenty minutes or half-an-hour against the

boisterous wind, we found that our two rowers made but little way against it; and it was so bitterly cold that my husband and I landed with Ali, the dragoman, to walk the distance to Keneh. The rest of the party remained in the boat, waiting to take advantage of every lull in the wind.

Ali soon left us to hurry on to the town and order our donkeys for the Denderah expedition. Remembering the dictum of the Reis as regards the "four or five miles," we raised no objection to his departure. Anything more unpleasant than the remainder of that walk it would be hard to find. The dust-storm came full upon us over that flat country, buffeting us, blinding us, choking us, until we could very nearly neither breathe nor see. Sometimes we crouched behind a mud-bank to let the worst gusts of wind and the pillars of dust, which whirled after each other across the plain, pass us by. Presently we came upon a miserable little village, a range of straggling huts along the pathway, of which the chief inhabitants were a pack of snarling, aggressive curs; and there are few more unpleasant beasts to encounter than an Egyptian village dog. To avoid these demonstrative animals, we left the path, which was somewhat inland, and tried to skirt along the river bank. This was leaving the frying-pan for the fire; instead of being attacked by dogs, we were now attacked by men, the owners of the gardens of cucumbers and gourds along which we were skirting; and matters might have become serious, in the absence of a common language of explanation, only for the never-failing one of coin, which in its usual capacity of oil on the troubled waters, smoothed the tempers of our aggressors with wonderful rapidity. We were allowed to go on our journey, after having bought enough cucumbers to fill our pockets. On and on we walked, the miles lengthening as we went; weary, storm-buffed and foot-sore, we still kept on till we reached Keneh, or rather the landing-place, the town itself lying some little way inland. Here we were only too glad to take refuge in the boat, which had at last overtaken us, and rest in it till Ali arrived from the town, the centre of a shrieking band of donkey-boys and their attendant animals. Having, at the risk of limb and tympanum, chosen our patient steeds, we mounted and rode about two miles lower down stream to the great ferry-boat, for it was too rough to attempt to cross the river in the *sandal*. It was as well in any case that we did not attempt it, for even in the great ferry-boat we were astonished at the time it took us to cross. Not to trust to one's eyesight in judging distances is one of the first lessons one should learn in the deceptive Egyptian atmosphere. Our donkeys were huddled together with the donkey-boys in the bottom of the ferry-boat, while we sat cross-legged on the Turkey carpet which always accompanied us on our expeditions, and which Ali had spread on the raised part of the boat at the stern.

Mounting our donkeys again, we rode to Denderah, which is

something less than a mile from the river bank; and a most interesting temple it is, more for its superior state of preservation than for the beauty or artistic merit of its sculptures, which, however, have been unmercifully chipped and knocked about, even the greater part of the capitals of the columns not escaping. But it certainly is most instructive and interesting to find a temple where all the halls, courts and chambers are architecturally in perfect preservation. The roof alone is a marvel; built of enormous blocks, or rather rocks, of stone, which give one an extraordinary idea of the strength of the walls and foundations which can support such tons of weight throughout the centuries since the days of Ptolemy XI., when the temple was begun, and those of Tiberius and Nero, when it was ended. On the ceiling of the portico we noticed the famous zodiac, over which the savants and Egyptologists had so many exhilarating quarrels, until the Greek inscription which had been overlooked, and the hieroglyphical names of the Cæsars on the exterior and interior walls, gave the clue to the problem, and reduced the probable date of this zodiac to a much later epoch than many had been willing to ascribe it. There are only three of these zodiacs as yet discovered in Egypt, at Denderah, Esneh, and El Dayr, and all three are ascribed to Ptolemaic or Roman times. It is worthy of remark that in the zodiacs of Denderah and Esneh, the sign "Cancer" is represented by the native scarabeus instead of the crab; and "Sagittarius," portrayed in the form of a centaur, undoubtedly betrays a Greek origin. On the abacus of the columns of the portico are charming tablets of a goddess suckling Horus. The main building is dedicated to Athor (or Venus), and on the architrave of the portico is a procession in honour of the goddess, in which we noticed two figures, one playing the harp and another the tambourine.

On the roof of the temple are two small chambers dedicated to Osiris, in which are some most interesting sculptures of Osiris dead and mummified. Many of the chambers of the great temple have very curious roofs, but the whole place seemed cold, dirty and neglected, and very different from the well-cared for aspect of Edfou. However, the architectural interest was, as I have said, very great, and we occupied ourselves exploring the many great halls and chambers, even to the Holy of Holies at the west end of the temple (the farthest from the portico and entrance), where, in a niche in the wall, which the king alone was allowed to enter, it is said was preserved the mysterious emblem of the great goddess Athor, a golden *sistrum*. Another interesting relic of another goddess of beauty is to be seen carved on one of the outside walls, *i.e.*, the portrait of the "Serpent of old Nile," the glorious Cleopatra herself. Whether it is simply an imaginary representation of the great Egyptian queen, executed by some contemporary artist who had never seen her, of course cannot be known; but this seemed to me a most likely interpretation of the fact that

neither in face nor figure does the so-called portrait give the smallest idea of the world-famous beauty.

As we rode away from the temple, we passed a camel with her foal, which presented a strange contrast to each other; the mother, an incarnation of patient, grave solemnity and profound contempt of mankind, the foal frolicking in and out amongst our donkeys, kicking up its heels at every moment through sheer lightheartedness, and evidently finding the world by no means a bad place. Poor little beast! like the young bears "his troubles were all to come," for he was only fifteen days old, though from his size I should have thought him a good deal older. These home-bred camels are more valuable in Egypt than those imported from the Soudan, owing to their acclimatization. When we were in Nubia, we saw the arrival of a flock of camels from the Soudan crossing the river at Korosko. They were then only worth forty francs apiece, but after a year's acclimatization in Egypt they would fetch two hundred francs each. The little camel at Denderah (who was nearly white and very woolly) would therefore be worth, when full grown, even more than an imported camel.

When we got to the Nile on our way back from Denderah, we found the storm just as high as ever, and as there was not the least hope of the dahabeeyah having been able to make any way against it, Ali had wisely engaged a native boat in which to sail up stream to our floating home. As Ali had many necessary purchases to make at Keneh, we first sailed across the river, and put him and my son ashore, to make their way inland to the town. Keneh is the nearest point on the Nile to the Red Sea, for the river here takes a bend to the east, which brings Kosseir, on the Red Sea littoral, within less than a hundred and twenty miles, an easy marching distance. There is, therefore, a considerable amount of trade with Arabia, and at Keneh one can buy little drums packed with peculiarly rich and luscious Arabian dates, Mocha coffee and fine tobacco. To all these dainties, our party being of various ages and tastes, we did much incline, and Ali was therefore commissioned to bring us a supply. Having thus left two of our party on shore, we sailed for the dahabeeyah. The wind was high, the water very rough, and the evening bitterly cold. The sand-banks (those curses to Nile navigation!) were so numerous that we had to tack back and forwards across the river, and as we had no ballast on board, the process was by no means devoid of danger. Some of the sand-banks were covered with dense masses of flamingoes and other kinds of cranes. We were more than two hours getting back, in spite of having the wind with us, and it was nearly nine o'clock when we at last reached the dahabeeyah, having had some difficulty in the darkness in making out her position under the high bank. We should not have found her at all, but that she had some lights showing, though not the proper lantern at her masthead. It was clear that as we had been

sailing before a high wind for two hours, we must at least have done twelve miles; the distance we had been beguiled into walking in the morning. It was pleasant to be on board again after our most unpleasant sail, and we went to dinner, hoping that my son and Ali would appear before it was over; as they had settled to ride back, we almost expected them to have arrived before we did. But dinner passed, and hour after hour followed, and still no boy and no dragoman. Then began all sorts of suppositions, one more disquieting than the other. They might have been mad enough to risk returning in the *sandal*, which had been left at Keneh, in which case they must have been infallibly upset on a sand-bank in the storm and darkness. To attempt to go down stream to look for them before daylight was utterly hopeless. The prospects of the land journey, as viewed by the pessimistic Reis, were hardly more hopeful. The villagers were "bad men," he said, and indeed we could hardly contradict him after our morning's experiences, and the travellers might have been stopped and robbed. He further added that he had sent the two Keneh men amongst the sailors out to search, and that it was no use sending any of the others, as they did not know the country and would not know the way in any direction; and the men backed up the latter assertion by flatly refusing to venture out of the boat. The gale of the morning had become a storm at night. The darkness was, perhaps not unnaturally, "Egyptian darkness that might be felt;" one could not see a yard before one. The only thing to do was to wait for the return of the Keneh men, whom the Reis declared he had sent to search for the lost travellers. It was not long before we found that this was but a further proof of the endless mendacity one encounters in Egypt. The two Keneh sailors had left the dahabeeyah early in the morning after our own departure, and had gone to the town to see their families. There was nothing to be done but to tie our most brilliant lantern to the masthead in the hope that it might be seen in spite of the intense blackness of the night, and to wait as patiently as we could for news or daylight. The misery of those hours of waiting will not be easily forgotten. At last, between two and three o'clock in the morning, we heard shouting on the bank above, and N—— and Ali descended with no small difficulty the precipitous clay cliff. N—— fired several shots from his revolver to guide the donkey-drivers, whom they had left behind, as on such a night it was necessary to feed and shelter them, the donkeys being tied to bushes on the top of the bank.

The wanderers' story was short. Their stay in Keneh had not been long, but they found such difficulties in getting donkeys, the drivers saying that the road was bad and hard to find, that Ali tried to get one of the large ferry-boats to sail them up stream. The storm, however, was so violent that no bribe would induce the boatmen to run the risk of the sail. By dint of heavy bribes, the

donkey-men at last consented to make the land journey, and very soon the troubles began. They lost their way almost immediately after leaving Keneh, tumbled into half-dry canals, in one of which Ali lost his slippers, went higher up the river than the position of the dahabeeyah, and finally, after nearly six hours of wandering in the black inky darkness, in storm and cold, they caught sight of the masthead lantern and reached home, having left the donkey-men on the road inland, when they approached the river to look for us.

And so, as "all's well that ends well," ended one of the longest, most fatiguing and most exciting days it has ever been my lot to spend in any country, and which will ever be one of those that remain freshest in my memory.

B L E N D A .

BY THE AUTHOR OF "JACK URQUHART'S DAUGHTER," ETC

"THE woman has behaved so badly, so shiftily; those green-eyed women are always shifty."

The speaker was a tall, fair, florid youth of some twenty-four years of age; the locality was a smoking-room in the house of Mr. Horace Ashton, the well-known surgeon, and the hour, to be precise, was five o'clock on a dull November evening.

"You see, she first of all encouraged it, and led me to believe that she and her husband would be very glad to see Tina married to me (she is only Tina's step-mother, you know), and then, when my big brother came on the scene and began making up to my little girl—as he does to every heiress—why, then Mrs. Fowler cooled off, like the snob that she is, and told Tina that she wasn't to dance so much with me, and that—and that, in short, *it wasn't to be*. It was a horrid shame; don't you think so, Horace?"

"It sounds rather unfair. But perhaps Challoner doesn't really want to marry Miss Fowler."

"Oh yes, he does. He admires her immensely, to begin with; and then she'll have five thousand a year. He'd marry a witch for two more. You know what he is; he doesn't care for Tina; he doesn't care for any one but himself, whilst I——"

"But I don't quite see what I am to do, what part I am to play, or how I can serve you by coming to this supper party to-night," interrupted Horace sharply. He did not mean to be unsympathetic, but he was very tired, and he had heard so often how much, how *very* much, his young friend, the Honourable Humphrey Challoner, cared for the beautiful Miss Fowler.

"Well, I want your opinion and your advice, which you cannot give until you have seen the family. I want you to take particular notice of Mrs. Fowler, and to tell me what you think of her. She is years and years younger than her husband; and some people admire her immensely. She is awfully vain, I should add, and more accessible to flattery than any one I've ever met, and I believe that you might talk her over, Horace, if you would only take the trouble. You see you are clever and I'm not, and Challoner is an elder son and a viscount, and I'm a younger son with nothing; and Tina is only eighteen, and does not come of age until she is twenty-five, and she says it'll kill her to wait so long, and—and altogether we haven't a hundred-to-one chance of

getting married unless somebody or other intervenes in our behalf. Captain Fowler wouldn't oppose us, I'm sure, if he were left to himself; but his wife is against me, and he is a mere lump of clay in her hands."

"All right; I'll come to the supper, then, as you are so anxious about it."

"And you'll be there by 11.30?"

"Good."

And, true to his word, at the hour named Mr. Ashton presented himself at the door of Captain Fowler's residence, a small house on the east side of Davies Street, Berkeley Square. He did not look forward with much pleasure to the evening's entertainment, for he disliked strangers, and he hated supper parties, but he was glad to oblige Humphrey Challoner, of whom he was very fond. Upon entering the dining-room Mr. Ashton found himself in the midst of a very lively party, that numbered amongst its members two pretty Americans, two wealthy young Guardsmen—to whom the Americans were laying siege—the Fowler family, and Captain Challoner, whose account of the family Mr. Ashton soon pronounced to be correct.

Mrs. Fowler was a distinctly pretty woman, but not a pleasing one. Her expression lacked frankness, and her manner suggested an almost morbid vanity. She had a little air of making a speech every time she opened her thin lips. Miss Fowler was simply lovely, and far too charming to be married for her money. Captain Fowler was palpably under his wife's thumb—a chinless being whose fluid character evidently took the impress of the strongest hand that grasped it.

"A hopeless case," thought Horace, after the first few minutes' talk with his hostess. "This woman is an arrant snob, and the bare idea of becoming mother-in-law to a viscount has turned her weak brain; she won't give in."

Presently the conversation, which was somewhat general, turned upon defective postal arrangements. One of the American ladies had lately posted, with her own fair hands, a letter to a friend in the Regent's Park that had never reached its destination. "Think how many an important communication may have been lost!" she exclaimed.

"Letters are never lost," said Captain Fowler, speaking with all the assertive temerity of the weak. "If a letter is rightly addressed and posted, it is delivered."

"Not always," interpolated Horace. "I could tell a curious story——"

"Oh, do," interrupted a chorus of female voices.

"Ashton tells a story awfully well," exclaimed Humphrey Challoner.

"Please tell us your story, Mr. Ashton," murmured Mrs. Fowler in a patronizing tone.

"It is an incident, an episode, rather than a story," said Horace. "A story, we are told, demands three things—a beginning, a middle, and an ending. My tale has only a beginning. And now to begin; and I must make it short, for the hour is late.

"One November day, some five years ago, I happened to come in earlier than usual, at about 4 p.m., feeling very tired and desperately sleepy. I ordered tea to be brought up at once, but before I had finished my second cup I fell fast asleep, with a newspaper and some letters that my servant had just handed me lying in my lap unopened, and my fox-terrier, Nell, dozing at my feet. I must have slept, I suppose, for nearly an hour, when I suddenly woke with a violent start that sent both newspaper and letters flying on to the hearth-rug, the former bursting its cover in the fall.

"When I had sufficiently recovered from the shock of this rude awakening to make any move, I stooped down and picked up the letter that was nearest to me, and which happened to be lying seal uppermost, and without even glancing at the address tore open the envelope and proceeded to read its contents. They were startling, I must admit."

"Was the letter from a lady or a gentleman, Mr. Ashton?" asked one of the Americans.

"From the former, and it stated that being weary of life, and unable to submit any longer to paternal tyranny, she intended to avail herself of her darling's oft-repeated request that she should fly with him, and that she therefore requested him to meet her 'at the terminus *here*' (where 'here' might be, I knew not, for there was neither date nor address affixed) on Tuesday next at 4.15. I had scarcely had time to finish the letter, or to wonder who could have written it to me, when my servant entered with a telegram demanding an immediate answer. Whilst I was framing my reply Cuthbert busied himself with making up the fire, and in so doing came into active collision with Nell, whom he never could manage—and who at once began to bark in a way that drove me nearly wild. As soon as my telegram was despatched I looked round for the cover of the mysterious epistle, which I had decided by this time ought never to have fallen into my hands; but it was nowhere to be seen. I asked Cuthbert if he had noticed it—a long white envelope.

"I suppose, sir," he answered in an aggrieved tone, for he and I were often at issue where Nell was concerned; "that that was what the dog had got hold of just now. I did try to take it from her, but I know you don't like to hear her bark. She dropped it at last, and I threw it into the fire, but it was just a mere pulp then. You couldn't have read what was written on it."

"So the envelope was destroyed, and with it had gone every chance of my ever being able to restore its contents to their destined recipient. Cuthbert then proceeded to inform me that he had only brought me in two letters—blue ones—with the

newspaper, and there they both were on the table, still unopened. So this third epistle, which was unquestionably never intended for me, had evidently arrived between the leaves of the *Field*, and had slipped out when the latter burst its cover in falling from my lap. During that following Tuesday afternoon, which was an awful one, I often thought of the unhappy young victim to paternal tyranny and hoped that she came to no serious harm."

"But her name, Mr. Ashton," exclaimed the American; "we're all dying to hear her name. Was there no signature?"

"There was, but——Good heavens! You'll be burnt." The last remark was addressed to Mrs. Fowler, who in stretching across the table to reach some bon-bons had nearly set fire to her lace sleeve.

With great presence of mind Horace seized her arm with one hand, whilst with the other he drew back the candle, but only just in time to avert a catastrophe; and then, as his eyes met those of his hostess, it occurred to him, in a flash of revelation, that this diversion had not been wholly unpremeditated. "Her name," he continued, after a moment's pause, "was—— But no! it is not fair to give up the name; it was such an uncommon one, too."

Oh, the look of relief that came into those light green eyes! If Horace had doubted for one moment the truth of his suspicions he was quite sure now that they were correct.

"It could not have been a more uncommon name than my wife's," said Captain Fowler proudly, as if his wife's uncommon Christian name reflected lustre upon the whole household. "I should think, dear, that you were the only Blenda in all England."

"Very possibly," said Horace drily.

The following day, Mr. Ashton, who received patients at home throughout the morning, was honoured by a visit from Mrs. Fowler. She had hurt her wrist in that little encounter with the candle, and had deemed it wiser to consult a surgeon. After giving the case his careful consideration, Horace hastened to assure his fair patient that there was nothing amiss; she had only been frightened, not hurt.

"That was a very interesting story you were telling us last night, Mr. Ashton," said Mrs. Fowler in a low nervous tone, as she was leaving the room. "Have you kept that wonderful letter?"

"I have. I thought I had destroyed it, but I came across it the other day in turning out the contents of an old dispatch box. But I mean to burn it."

"When?"

"Oh, before long. I cannot do it now, for the letter is at the top of the house, and I have at least half a dozen patients waiting to see me. But as you are so much interested in the story, Mrs. Fowler, I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll burn the letter in your presence—I'll bring it up to Davies Street——"

"Yes, yes! But *when*?" very impatiently.

"Must I fix a date? Shall we say, then, when I come up to pay my visit of congratulation? Your step-daughter's engagement to my old friend Humphrey Challoner is an open secret."

Mrs. Fowler turned crimson with anger, and for a moment made no reply; then as Horace was opening the door she paused for the second time:

"Mr. Ashton, don't judge me too harshly. I was very young at the time—only eighteen; and I was very miserable. You don't know, perhaps, the evil of an over-repressive system of education. But, believe me, I thank God every hour of the day that I was saved from eloping with that—scamp. The miscarriage of that letter saved me. I went up to the terminus (at Portsmouth), caught a severe chill dawdling about in the cold, and was in bed for weeks afterwards. When I recovered my father was—*gone*."

"I do not judge you harshly, Mrs. Fowler. I do not judge you at all. It is not my place—and I need not add that you may consider my silence a point of honour. But you'll plead Humphrey's cause with your husband; won't you? Ah! I know you will. Good-bye."

"So my story has an ending after all," thought Horace as he rang for his next patient to be shown in, "but it might have had a very different one if I had only glanced at the address of that letter before breaking its seal. It is strange how the little thing and the great thing—that which is forgotten as soon as ended and that which is never forgotten—to our lives' end hang together."

DUCHESS FRANCES.

By SARAH TYTLER,

AUTHOR OF "CITOYENNE JACQUELINE," "SAINT MUNGO'S CITY," "LADY BELL," ETC.

CHAPTER XIX.

"THE BOYNE WATER."

BUT in 1688 and '89 Frances had many private engagements, in addition to engrossing topics of public interest, to occupy her, apart from Cherry's settlement in life. In June, 1688, King James began to show plainly whom he considered his best friends. As for his opponents, he imprisoned, to the scandal of all England, "the seven bishops," for refusing on their consciences to sanction his Bill of Indulgence. He created Dick Talbot Earl of Tyrconnel, and appointed Frances one of the ladies of the bedchamber to the queen, who made a wry face and submitted to the appointment.

In November of the same year, William of Orange, invited by the great mass of the English nation to take the crown in his wife's name and his own, landed at Torbay. John Lord Churchill joined him at Salisbury, and Princess Anne, under the guidance of Churchill's wife Sarah, repaired to the insurgent camp at Nottingham. The unhappy King James, learning the news on his return to London, cried out in despair, "God help me! My own children have forsaken me." In December he sent the queen with their infant son to France, and followed them precipitately to St. Germain, where Louis XIV. received and entertained right royally the fugitives from his own deadly enemy.

But if William was king in England, James still reigned in Ireland; at least, he was likely to reign till men had sold their consciences to the highest bidder. For even the king's hero, the Divine right man, the most Roman Catholic of Roman Catholics, Tyrconnel, followed the example of saner statesmen at that melancholy time of political falsehood and double-dealing all round. He received overtures from King William, and played fast and loose with the great Dutchman. You may be sure the little countess was at her burly husband's back in these purely mercenary manoeuvres. However, early in 1689 all hesitation was over; James had appointed Tyrconnel his deputy, and revived for him the unacknowledged title of Duke of Tyrconnel. In return, a flag

was hoisted on Dublin Castle with the words "Now or never" embroidered on it by Frances' firm fingers, not without Cherry's shaking hands pressed into the service. That was an open proclamation that Ireland asserted her rights, one of the first at that moment being to plunder the Egyptians and work havoc and ruin far and near.

Now Duchess Frances had the opportunity of reigning queen in Dublin, and now Duke Dick asserted his warrant for disarming the Protestants and reducing them to such a pitch of despair that in horrified anticipation of another barbarous massacre like that which had befallen the Saxon settlers at the hands of the Celts in Charles the First's reign, the Protestant inhabitants of the capital, of the lands within the old pale and of the great towns in the north, began to forsake their shops, farms and mills, together with the fruits of their peaceful, if somewhat high-handed, industry, and to flee in bands to the coast, in order to quit the ill-fated country. In March, 1689, James, with his French supporters, landed at Kinsale, approved of all Tyrconnel's measures, and during part of the year which the king passed in Ireland, Frances had the honour of entertaining her royal master, as the wife of his representative, in Dublin Castle.

Over in England Lord Churchill, in the service of William, had been created Earl of Marlborough, and his wife was the all-powerful "Mrs. Freeman" with her so-called mistress and doting friend, Princess Anne, *alias* "Mrs. Morley."

Matters had assumed the appearance of a race for honours between sisters Frances and Sarah. Greedy eyes glittered, and ears on the strain for further good news itched apace, while Madam Jennings admitted that her two much-abused daughters had, after all, been wise women in their generation, wise wherein they had been most vilified, that is in the choice of their husbands. They had shown special forethought and discretion in furnishing pledges for the continued security and prosperity of the house of Jennings, whichever side triumphed. If James came to his own again, there was her Grace of Tyrconnel to plead for her family and afford those of them shelter who had fallen into bad ways and been mad enough to abandon the Lord's anointed. If William won the day, there was my Lady Marlborough to weep, protest and scold till her kindred the Tyrconnels were let off easily for their slowness of apprehension in a change of royal seats, and were either permitted to retire to France with the fortune they had been latterly accumulating, or else were suffered to take their places in the court of Ann Hyde's daughter.

One of the strange elements in Frances' present circumstances was the curious manner in which so many of her old acquaintances and allies came once more to the front in her history. A leading and pronounced Roman Catholic, who with Dick Talbot urged James to extreme reactionary measures, was a gentleman whom

Frances had known well in her youth, the same who had been master of the horse to the Duke of York when Dick Talbot was groom of the chamber, the same who had trifled with a girl's affections, and might have broken her heart if she had owned a heart easily broken. He was Harry Jermyn, who had ruined his fortunes at the gaming-table, and was now in a humour to lay aside his shilly-shallying, coxcombical airs and engage in a desperate game to refill his empty purse and regain his lost credit.

As for the Hamiltons, poor Count George's younger brothers, who had been Frances' brothers also once on a time, Richard and John, held high rank and were noted officers in King James's army—or had it better be called Tyrconnel's army, of which he was commander-in-chief? Both brothers rendered themselves conspicuous, John as a gallant fighter, who was slain at the battle of Aughrim, Richard in more ways than in fighting, though he was also a skilled and desperate fighter. It was he who, on the advice of Sir Richard Temple, Dorothy Osborne's husband, was sent in the character of an emissary of King William's to try to win over Tyrconnel from his allegiance to King James. Not improbably the selection was made with some reference to the fact that the accomplished Franco-Irishman had been a near connection of the Duchess of Tyrconnel's, and was the uncle of the Ladies Ross, Dillon and Kingsland. But in place of winning over Tyrconnel, Richard Hamilton, if he had ever been doing anything save grossly dissembling, was himself won back to the side of the Irish and French. It was he who led the Irish troops against Londonderry in the famous siege which lasted a hundred and five days, and was only raised after the garrison and townspeople had been reduced to their last two days' rations, when, as everybody knows, an English ship laden with provisions forced its way to the quay, and the blockade had to be relinquished. It was the same untrustworthy messenger and unsuccessful leader of the siege of Derry who in his command of the Irish horse at the battle of the Boyne performed such prodigies of valour as well-nigh to outweigh the collapse of the Irish foot soldiers. Frances must have heard much of her old friends the Hamiltons in those days.

Three kingdoms had come to the single throw of a battle at last, in spite of the reluctance of James to face the crisis. The battle was fought on a long summer day in the pleasant valley of the Boyne Water, and there was to be seen the pitiable spectacle which misrule and fanaticism had brought about, of father-in-law and uncle in one, on this side of the stream, and son-in-law and nephew on that, the two ranged in arms, the old man against the young, their hostile camps waiting for the signal to let loose the bloodhounds of war. So the Boyne Water was green and brown with the boughs William's men had broken off, by the king's orders, on their march, and with the muskets which the soldiers shouldered as they waded breast high, in the teeth of the enemy's cannon,

through the muddy water.* And every man on King James's side, whether French or Irish, wore, in compliment to King Louis, the white cockade which was thenceforth to be the badge of the Jacobites. Most people have heard how William was slightly wounded at the beginning of the fray and had to hold his sword in his left hand and guide his bridle-rein with his wounded right arm in crossing the water. Hamilton, with the cavalry, seeing the ignominious collapse of the ill-armed, ill-trained Irish infantry, struggled fiercely in the bed of the river. The Duke of Schomberg, one of the greatest generals of his age, fell rallying the Huguenots whom Hamilton was driving back. But where were King James and his doughty viceroy and commander-in-chief, Tyrconnel? James was viewing the rout of his army from a neighbouring hill, his chief concern being that the road to Dublin might be kept open for his retreat. Tyrconnel, as if infected by his master's lack of spirit, and being himself totally destitute of the experience which might have availed him at a pinch, showed himself confused and helpless and hardly ventured on a blundering command. Never was man more unlike himself, and in that sense nearer fulfilling the old Norse superstition of being *fey*, or possessed by a spirit, the reverse of his natural humour, presaging dire disaster.

It was the 1st of July, with enough of time from the sun's rising to his going down for the news of the battle to reach Dublin before nightfall. All day long the capital had been in an agony of expectation, Catholics and the few Protestants who were not in prison or in hiding alike hanging on what an hour might bring of deliverance or destruction. Frances and Cherry had watched and waited with the other watchers for many weary hours. Once, under the intolerable provocation of suspense, Frances had assailed her cousin.

"I hear, Cherry, your fine husband, though he hath left the army years ago and retired to his Kent pastures like the clod he is, serves as a volunteer in one of the regiments of the would-be parricide. This Peter Thornhurst's death would be a good riddance. It would be easier to dispose of thee as a widow than with a living clog of a husband who is yet no husband at thy heels."

Cherry shivered.

"I wish no harm to Peter Thornhurst, or to any man," she said faintly.

Towards evening there arose a grievous rumour that James and his allies had lost the battle. At first the duchess refused absolutely to believe it; at last confirmation which could not be contradicted came in the news brought by the first stragglers. King James with an escort of cavalry was approaching, heralding the return of all that was left of the beaten army.

Then Frances walked down to the gateway to receive her

* Macaulay.

sovereign as became a wife who regarded herself as seneschal of the Castle in her husband's absence. She did not, like Jezebel, tire her head and paint her face, for she was already in the full array of her hoop, her quilted petticoat, her lace "head." The roses lingering on her cheeks burned like fire, her eyes blazed with rage and shame. Why had she not been a man to change the fortunes of the day? This was a different meeting from any she had calculated upon—a very different meeting from those gay encounters in the old days at Whitehall and St. James's, when her flippant, girlish wit had been retailed for her master's benefit, or he had been one of the admiring lookers-on who watched *La Belle Jennings* dancing divinely in the coranto.

"Madam," said James, full of mortification and wrath, with the utter absence of tact which rendered him so much more unpopular than his Bohemian brother, "your husband's countrymen have proved themselves mighty clever at running away."

"I am sorry to hear it," answered Frances with such a turn of the neck as only she could have given in addition to her profound courtesy; "but let us give every man his due—your Majesty has won the race."

CHAPTER XX.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

AFTER humanely forbidding any attempt on the Catholics' part to destroy Dublin before William could arrive, James left for Kinsale and embarked in a French ship for Brest, amidst the disorder and disorganization prevailing in Dublin, from which it was now the turn of the Romanists to fly. The Duke of Tyrconnel and the French commander, the Comte de Lauzun, gathered together their remaining forces and marched out of the city on their way to Limerick. Frances did not stay in the Castle to receive King William as she had received King James, or to witness the former go in state, wearing his crown, to the cathedral, to return thanks for his victory. In fact, a mission, as difficult and dangerous as it was important, had been committed to the duchess, and it was some consolation to her in the overthrow of her greatness to conduct it with her usual energy and promptitude. She was intrusted not merely with conveying to France the wrecks of her husband's fortune, but with taking back to the place whence it had come all that remained in King James's treasury of the loans and gifts vouchsafed by King Louis, and of the proceeds of such of poor Mary of Modena's jewels as she had lately been pawning and selling on her husband's behalf.

The better to accomplish her task, the duchess, with her sole remaining child, quitted the Castle before the duke left, and

attended only by Cherry, and a maid and a man—as in the old days of Bet Ball and Barty Knevett, went to a house on College Green belonging to a family of Jacobites whose fidelity could be safely depended upon. Two of her Grace's daughters who were in town visited her surreptitiously, all other visitors were strictly forbidden lest attention should be drawn to her movements and to the effects she was carrying away with her. One or two of the heads of the great Roman Catholic houses were to meet her on the coast, and do what they could to aid her in leaving the country. Frances and Cherry were to lie hidden in the house on College Green till nightfall on the second day after the battle, when they were to proceed to Howth and take boat to a ship lying some distance off, to avoid suspicion, but ready to set sail with wind and tide for a Scotch port, from which, if the duchess did not receive contrary orders, she could go direct to France.

It was well that the journey, save for the little bit at starting, was to be made wholly by sea, for never had the roads, north, south and west, to and from the capital been in a more cumbered and unsafe condition. They were traversed by portions of the successful army, consisting of men of all nations, stolid Dutch, rough Germans, stern Huguenots, roused indignant Englishmen. And not all their great commander's calm humanity and love of method and order could keep his soldiers from losing their heads in the hour of victory, and indulging in spurts of lawless pillage and cruel rapine. The highways and byways were further haunted by lurking bands and single specimens of the broken army, men with their lives not worth an hour's purchase; hunger-bitten, consumed by thirst, mad from despair. Months after the battle of the Boyne, in some of the remoter districts in which the fugitives had been forced to take refuge, from which they could not get away, Irish officers and gentlemen were accused of having been guilty of highway robbery, as the sole resource left to enable them to keep their miserable souls and bodies together. The Irish word *toree*, which is interpreted "give up," is said to have been their challenge on such occasions. It was afterwards, under its modification "Tory," retained and applied to Jacobite gentlemen and their successors, half as a term of reproach, half as a party designation.

It would have been hard to conceive a more formidable and deplorable obligation laid on two women, than the necessity of their travelling with a child and a couple or so of servants on the ordinary roads, by ordinary means, at such an exceptional season.

In the middle of the intense anxiety and repressed bustle of the Duchess of Tyrconnel's last day in Dublin, Mistress Thornhurst was summoned from the room in which her cousin was issuing orders to the last, to see a gentleman who sought speech with Cherry. He was so pressing in his request that the people of the house did not know how to evade it, held it wiser to grant it, than to excite remark by denying the gentleman admission.

Indeed there was no proclamation out as yet proscribing her Grace the duchess and her friend or gentlewoman—whichever she might be. They were still free to go or stay as they might, and this importunate visitor might be a friend to inquire after their welfare and bring fresh instructions from the Lord Deputy. The gentleman was a stranger in that quarter of College Green and his pointedly asking for the gentlewoman might be a mere blind to conceal his real errand to the duchess.

"Go, Cherry, and see who the fellow is and what he wants at such a time," said Frances without an instant's hesitation. "I should say it is some scurvy knave of a tradesman come pressing for payment at the last moment. Tell him he hath had enough of my custom anyhow, to let his bill wait a little. Not a brass farthing shall the despicable rascal get from me for his pains."

Cherry, in haste and bewilderment, went into the white-panelled parlour, well mellowed with tobacco smoke, where the gentleman was awaiting her, and scarcely noticed in her excitement that Lady Charlotte Talbot, a little girl between nine and ten years of age, had followed her out of the room and was hanging on her arm.

Cherry was at once confronted by a gentleman, not a tradesman; a man in a sober riding suit of dark green cloth, with long boots, not in any of the uniforms with which she had been so familiar lately. He was a man past his first youth, a big man with clear eyes, white teeth and a ruddy complexion like one accustomed to wholesome country exercise and fare, who had led an honest, temperate life, but did not always resist a choleric temper. He had an air of authority verging on respectable tyranny, which bred in him a homely dignity that had something patriarchal in it. He was a gentleman whom middle life became better than youth could have suited him, whom age would still more improve and elevate. He was the typical squire who lived chiefly on his own acres, where he was a benevolent despot. Withal, he had the upright carriage and firm step which a taste of soldiering, such as belonged to a young squire's training, might have given.

She knew him in an instant though she had not seen him for four and twenty long years, not since she was a simple girl of fourteen. Now she was a woman of thirty-eight, who had known much of the world and its changes. He was exactly as she would have pictured him grown, only she saw him with other eyes.

He did not need to ask who she was. He had sought her by her name and she had come at his summons. Yet she was no more like what he had imagined her, than he had found the young girl answer to their previous acquaintance the last time he had seen her. She had undergone a second complete transformation. She was as far removed from the dainty trembling little bride he had wedded in St. Ann's Church, burnt to ashes hard on a quarter of a century before, as the fairy bride had stood leagues apart from the Cinderella of the Hills' house in Speedwell Lane. In the

meanwhile, though he had never lost sight of the flight of time for himself, he had clean forgotten, where she was concerned, the four and twenty years which had fled since the couple parted. This fine woman, very comely in the perfection of her autumn charms, was as handsome as any of her sex, with the treasures of ripe womanly wisdom and experience on her sweet lips and in her kind eyes. She was a fit companion for a mature man, one who could be an interested intelligent listener to his projects and troubles, a trusty councillor in his difficulties. Her entire appearance lent itself to the impression. She wore a sedately rich and matronly dress, which no disaster had sufficed to disorder. Above her brown hair, which had one or two silver streaks in faint contradiction to the habitually serene brow and tranquil dark eyes, she had the high arrangement of lace falling down in lappets on her shoulders, the fashion of the day, which added a couple of inches to her stature and emphasised her age with a stately emphasis, though as a matter of fact it was a style of head-gear exacted from both married and unmarried women of her rank, even before they had done with their teens.

She might have been a still beautiful matron of twenty years' standing, the benign mistress of a fortunate man's household, the honoured happy mother of stalwart lads and blooming girls. Nay, it seemed to his dazzled eyes as if the girl who held by Cherry's arm with all the freedom of a privileged intruder on her leisure and appropriator of her attention, was the shadowy reflection of the long line of grateful descendants with which fortune ought to have endowed this gracious motherly woman. Of all women Cherry had the very least of that meagreness, stintedness and dash of fantasticalness, in look and character, which men are wont to associate with single women, which single women need never bear except by their own choice and doing. The life of no wife and mother among her contemporaries had been richer in active human charities than Cherry's, and here was the result in the unconscious gentle stateliness and sweet graciousness of the bountiful woman, before the churlish man who had disowned her.

He was fairly staggered by a sense of his own native inferiority and unwarrantable presumption. There came to him also, for the first time in his relations with Cherry, a thrill of bitter rue and keen self-regret. His tongue clave to the roof of his mouth.

It was Cherry who spoke first. "What is your pleasure with me, sir—Squire Thornhurst if I mistake not?" she spoke very quietly though her voice shook a little. She did not mean to reproach him; it was as a mere statement which explained itself, together with her wish to end the interview as quickly as possible, that she added, while she was not aware that she spoke with involuntary coldness, "You have come at an awkward time, naturally the duchess is much engaged to-day. You must excuse me for bid-

ding you say what you have to say at once, and letting me withdraw without delay."

When he still remained silent she first noticed that the child Lady Charlotte was with her, and supposed he was hampered by her presence. "Go away, Charlotte, and stay with her Grace," Cherry hastened to enjoin her small charge; "tell her I shall be back presently." She dismissed her irrepressible little companion and closed the door after her.

CHAPTER XXI.

A PASS FOR A NON-COMBATANT.

AT last he found voice. "Madam," he said hoarsely, advancing a step towards her, "believe me, I came to see if I could be of any use to you or your cousin in your sore strait. That must justify my intrusion at this hour. I had reason to be afeared you might attempt to quit Dublin and travel north or south. I could not answer to my conscience—no, I could not—for letting you perish, nay, for suffering you to run any grievous risk." He took a pocket-book from an inner pocket, and fumbled among its papers. Stout-hearted man of more than forty as he was, his sinewy hand was unnerved and his clear eyes clouded. At length he found two official papers, which he laid on the table before her. The one was fully made out and signed by King William. It was a pass for Mistress Peter Thornhurst to journey through the king's lines in any direction. In the other pass, signed also by the king, the name of the privileged person was left blank. "It is for my Lady Tyrconnel," he said stiffly, with another effort, "provided she will pledge herself to go in peace, and leave all treasonable machinations behind her. She is but a woman after all, though she is the late king's Deputy's wife, and her plight is like to be doleful. She may have less objection to let the past be forgotten if she be told that it was out of consideration for her brother-in-law, Lord Marlborough, that I succeeded in getting the paper. She will owe nothing to me, unless she and you care to accept my escort to a place of safety, where I swear to take you and leave you at your own discretion," he said hurriedly and with blunt emphasis.

"We are much beholden to you, sir," she answered, not mockingly, and with no lack of gratitude in her mild tones, though with inevitable dryness. "I care not to dissemble. I am assured you will not abuse any confidence given you. We are bound to-night for Howth, where we will get on board a ship that will carry us beyond King James's and Lord and Lady Tyrconnel's enemies. As for me," she added with a slight smile, "I am too insignificant a person to have foes."

"I know not that," he said discontentedly. "Bethink you what trouble your cousin and mine"—with a snort of cherished resentment at the words—"have got you into ere now. She may have introduced you into high company. Oh, yes, she is a countess and a duchess, and a very grand madam, but her ways are not those of people of honour—honour forsooth! of common honesty and natural feeling."

"I will not have her character blackened on such a day as this," she told him, firing up with sudden spirit and tenderness. "She is my kind kinswoman and old friend, who has sheltered me all these years."

He turned away as at a home thrust. Then he resumed, irrelevantly as it sounded, "You love France and French fashions." He spoke gloomily, coming back and confronting her like one who made a hard but just accusation.

"I know not that I do," she answered hastily, "not better than England and English fashions; though I may be perverse and unfair in my indecision, for when I think on't, I have spent nearly twice the time in France that I have passed in England."

"And you have been courted and made much of there," he continued, with evident rankling suspicion and resentment. "You have had reason to give the preference to France, though, unluckily for yourself, you were not quite free to give it."

She flushed up at his words, though she was able to reply to them with grave moderation. "I said but a moment ago that I had no such preference, Master Thornhurst, yet in truth I might have had it, though I know not that I was ever courted and made much of, as you put it. I grew up there, and I was not without friends; poor Count George and Count Anthony Hamilton were always friendly. Neither was Madame de Gramont unmindful, though, without doubt, I was not in her set—the court set. I had friends among humbler folk—old ladies from the provinces, with narrow incomes; soldiers' widows, on small pensions, not too well off, like ourselves, like Cousin Frances, I mean, before her second marriage. There were old Madame Le Brun, who had charge, in the absence of the proprietor, of that part of the *hôtel* which he and his family occupied when they were in Paris, and Madame Le Brun's granddaughters, her son, the grizzled one-armed captain, and Barty Knevett and Bet Ball. They married in self-defence, to keep up their English, a score of years since, and set up a thriving *laitière* of their own." She glanced up at him with the least little dimple in the still rounded oval of her cheek, as who would say, "you must remember Barty Knevett and Bet Ball, the odd man and maid-of-all-work, who went to France with Lady Hamilton and me, twenty-four years since? Why, you heard all about them in those days."

He refused to give any sign of recognition of the old servants' names, or of interest in their fortunes. He still spoke gruffly, almost rudely. "You might find better company than that at

home, if you had a mind to," he said, looking down and twirling the watch-guard at his fob. Then he suddenly broke out with fire and fury, "Cherry, you bear my name, whether lawfully or unlawfully, whether it be a misfortune to you and me or not, doth not so much matter, as that I cannot bide, whatever you may do, that you should take it back to foreign parts, to be bandied about in strange company, and soiled as some foul tongues soil all they touch. I call on you to come with me to England, to Kent, to take up your abode in my house of Three Elms, which is your home, as is only decent and proper."

She stared at him in amazement and rising indignation. "It is late in the day to make such a proposal," she said as cuttingly and haughtily as if she had not been the patient Grizel of her generation. "I refuse, sir, point blank. I will not go with you. The time has long gone by for your exercising the right to ask me."

"But I have the power to make you. Methinks you forget that, madam," he told her plainly.

"An' you dare to use it, against my will, at this date," she answered him, with fine teeth set, "I promise you that you will have your hands full, and that I shall think worse of you than I have ever thought yet. Better remind me at once that you and your side in this unnatural war are the conquerors, and that we—my poor duchess, who was as good as a queen this day se'en night, and me her hapless cousin—hapless in that I cannot save her from a second downfall, though I am still and ever her willing servant—are at your mercy."

He was taken aback and quelled by that reminder. "God forbid," he said solemnly, "that I should take advantage of your need. You must think badly of me, indeed, if you think that." Then he suddenly changed his tone, and asserted his own poverty and hard case. "Dost never think, madam, that thou hast spoilt my life?" he asked her sharply; "that I am more lonesome and forlorn than if I had been a widower twice over, for then I might have had sweet instead of bitter memories, if I had nought else. My hearth is desolate, and my name will die out so far as I am concerned in the next generation."

She stood silent and self-convicted, with bowed head and drooping figure, more pitiable, more wounded and more humiliated in her ripe womanhood than if she had been a young girl.

"My lady had her hour's fooling," he began again fiercely.

"No, no," she interrupted him eagerly; "you do her great injustice. She made a terrible mistake. She was over forward and meddlesome—it is one of her weaknesses; but she meant no harm. She thought to do us both, and me especially, a good turn."

"A mighty queer good turn," he said with a sneer which was not natural to him; "yet you stand by her still! I presume that

is your nature. I might have taken steps to break the monstrous bond—my uncle thought to do it; but I could not, when I was older and my consent was wanted, agree to rip it all up and stand the jeers of an idle, mocking public. Hast forgotten, Cherry, what a hopeful, hearty lad I was when I came up to London first? How I was ready to face the whole world, and believed that I had it at my feet? Now this is the end on't—a blighted and a sorry end."

"Oh! I am sorry for you," cried Cherry, breaking down and shedding the salt tears so hard to wring from eyes no longer young. "I have been so sorry all these years for my share in your wedding," speaking as if the cruel injury—the heavier part of which had fallen on the woman's head—had been inflicted solely on him. "Forgive me! Peter Thornhurst. Oh! forgive me, before we part. I was so young and so misled."

"If you are really sorry, madam," said Peter, half in a lordly way, half with eager wistfulness, "you can make up for it yet, so far as time is left us. Come with me when I bid you, and do your duty as a wife henceforth. We'll be married over again if you wish it, to make matters sure."

"I cannot, sir," she cried desperately. "What! leave her in her extremity and danger, when she has cared for me and let me be her friend all these years; when even in her first great loss she kept me by her side and never dreamt of sending me away, though she had her children growing up round her, and my absence would have made one mouth less to feed in her pinched household?"

He frowned heavily, ground his strong, white teeth, and stamped about in his riding boots, almost as if he had been Dick Talbot; for Squire Thornhurst was a man of a short, impatient temper, and latterly he had not been much used to contradiction. Presently he approached her with fresh importunity and newly-born passion for the woman before him—altogether lovely and lovable always, however lightly he had esteemed her budding youth. Now she was disarming him, and compelling him to sue where he had thought to dictate.

"If these are the chief barriers—my lady and your life-long friendship for her—I say not that it is not fit they should be taken into account. Benefits received have consecrated old use and wont, while you were ever over grateful, Cherry, mindful of the slightest favour conferred, and unmindful of the heaped-up measure of service rendered in return. But when you have gone abroad with your cousin and established her in comfort—such comfort as can come to a woman who has played an ambitious game, and lost when all was done—if I wait and follow and claim my rights, what then?"

"I cannot tell," she said faintly in great agitation. "Do not ask me now. We are no longer young," she went on in a

half-mechanical tone. "Better stay as we are, content with what we have saved from the ruin of our lives."

"I do not feel so old as that comes to," he protested discontentedly. "I believe I could begin all over again."

"Because you are a man, whereas I am a woman ; which makes the odds," she told him quickly. "Get that dissolution of our foolish marriage, which you talked of a moment since, and begin over again, with another and a younger woman."

"Never ! after seeing you once more, and seeing you aright, this time," he said with simple fervour, rejecting her suggestion with disdain. "Is this truly the last word you have to say to me, mistress ?"

Her lips quivered, so that they could not utter a syllable ; her kind eyes were dim with tears ; she sought to pass him by in silence, but he caught her in his arms and held her there, snatching from her yielding mouth a different answer to his question.

(To be concluded.)

SOCIAL ECHOES.

By MRS. HUMPHRY.

AS I write, the nation is wearing external marks of mourning for the aged Duchess of Cambridge, and the effect, on park and church and theatre, is curious to note. Even in the most fashionable society, there is a large number of persons who never wear complimentary mourning, having a prejudice against it that has all the effect of a principle, though it takes its root in a bit of superstition. Many people entertain the belief that if they don mourning for one who is not related to them, they will certainly soon after be obliged to wear it for some one who is. This is silly and childish, of course, but it is an article of faith with many, and this being so, one can hardly blame them for acting in accordance with it. The consequence is that there is always, in times of general mourning, a sprinkling of well-dressed persons who wear colours. It is a matter of good taste that these colours shall be of a subdued and quiet kind, however.

On the other hand, the ladies of strongly Radical tendencies decline to wear mourning for very different reasons. Their colours are brilliant, indeed; as emphatic as their opinions. Belonging to this "opposition" faction is a lady whose toilet of brightest terra cotta made some sensation in the park on one of the sunniest mornings of this week. While all around her were in black, white and black, or grey, she moved with a self-assertive air in her gaudy gown, provoking much comment of a kind that she would not have been pleased to hear.

Were the Queen to appear more in public, her commands on the subject of mourning would be more universally attended. Her Majesty possesses the faculty of observation in a remarkable degree. Very little escapes the Royal eye, and a costume such as the one described above would elicit a stare of disapprobation which would not be soon forgotten by its recipient. But our Queen is so rarely seen among her subjects that they venture to disregard her wishes in these matters. It must be said, however, that the great majority at once put themselves into neutral grey or black and white, and make their servants wear mourning liveries. At "prayerbook parade," on Sundays, during the ten days' mourning, the grey costumes were numerous. Perhaps the prettiest was a Redfern tweed, embroidered in black, and worn with a little coat, the lapels of which were embroidered to match,

and thrown back from a white cloth waistcoat embroidered in black also. The little black Alsatian bonnets are very becoming to pretty faces and are worn very far back on the head. One lady appeared, early as the season was, in a dress of striped black silk opening over black lace in front, and with long lace sleeves beginning under jet epaulets upon the shoulders and reaching to the hem of the dress. Through these were visible the plain silk sleeves beneath them.

One of the smartest audiences of the year assembled to see Mrs. Arthur Stannard's new play "Rumour," at the Vaudeville, early in April. The plot is founded upon a story told in "Garrison Gossip," and in it are the materials for a good play. A knowledge of the "business" of the stage is the point in which Mrs. Stannard proved herself to be lacking. Trivial as this may seem, as compared with the construction of a play, it is of the highest importance when the piece comes to be put upon the stage, and it is one of the principal difficulties of the dramatist so to dispose of his *dramatis personæ* that they never encumber or interfere with each other. "Rumour" may yet be successful, and hold the boards as "Bootles' Baby" does, if recast in a mould that will include these exigencies.

The success of Mr. Richard Mansfield as Richard III. is beyond the expectations of even his most sanguine friends. The Globe is crowded nightly with an audience that proves the falsity of the saying that "Shakespeare spells bankruptcy." The Lyceum, with "Macbeth," joins issue with the Globe in disproving this.

"Sweet Lavender" has now reached its 400th representation. It is a pretty play that pleases all but the cynic and the fanatical adorers of burlesque, who devote their appreciation so entirely to that form of art that none is left for pure comedy.

"Dorothy's" long run is over, and the career of "Doris" is begun, with the same sweet-voiced cast. The verdict of the public has not yet been pronounced upon this, but it will probably be favourable. "Paul Jones" is a great success, and commands the smartest audiences in London. "Nadgy" is over. "Still Waters Run Deep" is being played at the Criterion, and no one should miss seeing Mrs. Bernard Beere in this. She proves how much intense earnestness of grip upon one part can do towards deepening the tone of an entire play.

Under the title of "A Cycle of Verse," a young girl has just brought out a volume of poems. To judge by her muse-like portrait in the frontispiece of the volume, she is as poetic of aspect as some of her lyrics are melodious in rhythm. One of the best of these is entitled "The Greatest Books."

"There are two books I love to read,
So fair are they, so deep indeed,
And strangely true; that when I dare,
View from beneath their covers fair,

What to me is plainly writ,
 I feel unworthy—little fit,
 To be the one to recognize
 The mystic lore that in them lies.
 I—of all! For never a sage
 Of these dear works could solve a page,
 Or guess their aim; or ever tell
 As I—one hundredth part as well—
 The boundless love, the trust that lies
 In those two books—my dearest's eyes."

Certain lapses here and there appear to show that English is not the mother-tongue of the poetess, a belief that is strengthened by her name, Hélène E. A. Gingold, and yet she seems to be familiar with the poets of the last century. In the following extract, the traces of this knowledge are strangely combined with the colloquialism of our own day:

"What shall I wish thee,
 My bonny and gay?
 That thy life's season be
 One long sweet May.
 Come hither, laughing one,
 Come to me, fair,—
 See how that dear old sun
 Strays on thy hair!"

And in the same poem, which is called "To Idylne," the authoress' youth makes her set down the age of forty years as somewhere near life's close.

Some of the lines "On a Young French Prince" are admirable.

It must often have occurred to readers of the daily and weekly papers that some of the best writing, worthy of a permanent place in literature, is necessarily ephemeral. A leader that appeared on "Mothers," in the *Daily News* a short time ago, is so full of wit and humour that it recalls this idea. It is written about those mothers who never talk on any subjects but those connected with the nursery, and whose condition of mind has been fully discussed in an American paper called *Babyhood*. In this publication, the problem of comfortably combining motherhood with attention to current literature has apparently been discussed at some length. One lady's heart yearns, she says, "over the poor mother who has literary aspirations that conflict with the grandest of all aspirations and realizations, motherhood;" and she goes on to say that her own four children have developed her more than any number of books could do. But what is to become of us if women are never to have any higher ambition than the one that this American lady describes as "the grandest of all aspirations?" And if literature is to be sacrificed to the nursery and its little inmates, what will the latter, when they begin to appreciate books, think of their mothers? Surely books and babies can be enjoyed together. Well-conducted babies spend most of their time in sleep. Is the mother to be lost in contemplation of the cradle and its contents

while the latter slumber? Even the lower animals permit themselves to go about the ordinary avocations of their lives while their young are comfortably asleep. And they cannot hire nurses as humans can.

If women must be "all mother," and unable to disengage their thoughts from their babies, why do they dine out? Thus asks the writer in the *Daily News*. It is cruel to entertain a man all through a long dinner with nursery talk. Hostesses should send the mothers down in couples, instead of following the usual plan, when this enthusiasm for nurseries exists. The ladies would then enjoy themselves thoroughly, both talking at once and neither listening. Some such plan might be adopted in the interests of men who do not enjoy hearing about the sayings and doings of other men's children.

People who ride hobbies are not fit for festive scenes. Dinner seems a very long and dull affair, however excellent it may be as dinner, when one's companion dilates upon one solitary subject during its entire length. Men can be quite as great bores as "mothers" whose hobby is the nursery. I remember once being mentally prostrated after a two hours' dinner at which the gentleman selected for me by the hostess talked cremation the whole time. It is not the most agreeable of topics at any time. I suppose we all have our hobbies, but we should ride them in seclusion; and, above all, let us hide them away at the sacred hour of dinner, and take a hint from the succession of courses, and let our conversation deal with a large variety of topics, all lively and serene.

LONDON SOCIETY.

JUNE, 1889.

A NEW OTHELLO.

A NOVEL.

By IZA DUFFUS HARDY,

AUTHOR OF "LOVE, HONOUR AND OBEY," "NOT EASILY JEALOUS," "ONLY A LOVE STORY,"
"LOVE IN IDLENESS," &c., &c.

CHAPTER I.

THE FAIREST FACE.

"And Pelleas, gazing, thought,
'Is Guinevere herself so beautiful?'"

THE time is mid-day; the season, spring; the place, New York harbour; the scene, the deck of one of the great Atlantic liners lying in dock, about to sail on her homeward voyage—a busy scene of crowd, bustle and confusion. The whole length of the long wharf is black with people, ranks on ranks of lookers-on—loafers, idlers, interested or merely curious spectators—packed together in a solid mass, waiting to witness the departure of the ocean giant.

Ashore there is an ear-bewildering tumult and turmoil, as carts, carriages, trucks, drays and vans, which have brought passengers, passengers' friends, goods, chattels and baggage, to the landing-stage, are all entangled and jammed in apparently inextricable confusion, whilst all the drivers seem to be trying to shout and outswear each other. On board there is not quite so much noise, although as much bustle, as a moving multitude, thick as swarming bees, surge up and down the stairs, stream along the passages, and pour in and out of the cabins. The saloon is filled, the companion-way well-nigh blocked; but on deck the crowd can circulate more freely. Every passenger has a party, large or small, of friends who have come on board to indulge in *adieux* and *au revoirs* at leisure and until the last minute.

"Not in single spies, but in battalions," do the Americans rally round their departing friends. None so poor and so obscure as not to be "seen off" by some one; none so lonely as to be left to set sail alone. Even the stranger who has "tarried but a day" in the hospitable city of New York, who has rushed through the "grand tour" of the Transatlantic world without time to form a friendship or enjoy an insight into American social life, has picked up somehow a handful of acquaintances—and here they are, faithful, to the fore, come to see the wanderer off.

On the deck, surveying the animated scene with that measured degree of interest which the travelling Briton generally permits himself to betray, are standing two men, English both, and English gentlemen too, as it does not need a second glance to tell. They are both of about the same stature, close on six feet in height; and there is a certain family resemblance in feature, not in colouring, nor in expression, between them. One is a broad-shouldered, deep-chested, fair-haired Saxon, in the early prime of life, good-looking enough to pass muster in a roll call of handsome men—more especially if the roll were called by the mothers of daughters—mothers parentally awake to his position and prospects. He has an air of lazy good-humour, and somewhat inert strength—inert only because it does not seem to him worth while to exert it. The other is a few years younger, and of slighter, although scarcely weaker build, lithier in figure, quicker in movement, with darker hair and eyes, and more vivacity and mobility of expression, yet bearing that unmistakable family likeness to his fair-haired and stalwart companion.

They are uncle and nephew; but the equal affection and good comradeship between them is more like that of two brothers when brothers are also thorough friends. They are "not much addicted to conversation," these fellow-travellers. When they have got anything to say, they say it; but they are not given to making talk for talking's sake. So they are standing side by side, contemplating the busy scene in sociable silence; at least the uncle is looking on at the crowd in general, the nephew at one of its individual items in particular—a woman, young and tall and fair, in an unexceptionable and becoming grey dress, who has caught and fixed his roving attention—when a third Englishman, who is lounging along the deck glancing about him in the moving throng, casts his eye on the elder of our two travellers and comes to a halt.

"Why, hullo, Carresford!"

Geoffrey Carresford replies by an equally eloquent and original greeting:

"Hullo, Rockleigh!"

"Who'd have thought of seeing you here? Going across?" inquires Lord Rockleigh, with a vague jerk of his head in the direction wherein he supposes England to lie.

"Yes; we're homeward bound. Heard you were in New York, but didn't know you'd be going over on the same boat. This is Ray—don't you remember the youngster, Ray Percival?"

"By George, I do," replies Rockleigh heartily, holding out his hand. "I should scarcely have known him at first, though. Come and see Lady Rockleigh—she's just over there."

Geoffrey Carresford accompanies him readily, but young Percival steals a glance over his shoulder at the face which has attracted him as he more slowly and even reluctantly follows, regarding the probability of losing sight of "that girl in grey" in the crowd.

"Here she is," says Lord Rockleigh. "Maud, I've brought my old schoolfellow, Mr. Carresford—and Mr. Percival," he adds, glancing round in search of his other companion, "to introduce to you."

Then as Lady Rockleigh bows graciously and extends a daintily-gloved hand, her husband includes a young lady who stands by her side in the introduction, saying:

"My niece—Lady May Rivers."

Lord Rockleigh is by no means as favourable a specimen of English manhood as either of these two compatriots of his whom he has just presented to the ladies of his party. He is, to say the truth, an ugly little man; but he has a wife who, with all the adjuncts of dress and those mysteries of the toilette into which the masculine mind does not as a rule inquire too closely, may fairly pass as a beauty. She possesses still—thanks to either art or nature, or a happy combination of both—as blooming a complexion and as luxuriant golden hair as in her youth, which has certainly passed by, though it would be indiscreet to inquire how long ago it took its leave.

Lady May Rivers is young and fair—one of the fortunate many who charm without perfection of feature; nay, more than that, who charm in despite of several little imperfections; but the critic would be stern indeed who could sit as a Daniel in judgment upon that face, or could retain his critical faculties at all when looking into those eyes—large eyes of soft and limpid brown, shaded by long curling lashes. The brown hair, touched with gold, just matches them in hue. There is a delicious dimple like a baby's in the rounded cheek, a sweet half-wistful expression about the full rose lips, which being always half parted, give her a child-like and guileless look. Her aspect altogether is one of alluring and appealing softness—than which nothing can be further removed from mawkishness or insipidity—brightened by little sparkles of half-demure, half-mischievous, playfulness.

A bewitching little woman is Lady May Rivers; and Mr. Carresford mentally pronounces a favourable verdict on her appearance, whilst regarding her perhaps rather approvingly than admiringly. He is very well used to pretty women, and also to finding himself appreciated by them; and he is not easily moved to

anything more enthusiastic than the temperate but sincere approbation he bestows now on Lady Rockleigh's early-widowed niece—for a widow this girl is, although she has cast off her weeds. She is in reality my lady's niece, not his lordship's, although the latter by adoption and affection regards and always speaks of her as "his" niece.

Mr. Carresford smoothes his heavy tawny moustache as he looks down into the *piquante* alluring little face, and makes some casual remark *à propos* of their "all going across."

"Yes; fellow-victims!" she smiles.

"Are you a victim, Lady May?"

"Unless the Atlantic deals tenderly with me."

"I'm sure it—it ought to," he replies; and it is the first time he has ever stumbled into anything even so remotely approaching a compliment on three minutes' acquaintance.

"The ocean is unluckily feminine; one can't expect chivalrous consideration from it," she rejoins.

The voice is as demurely and archly sweet as the upward glance of her eyes; but to promise chivalrous consideration for his own poor part would be far too great a stretch of demonstration for Geoffrey Carresford at his present stage of development; so he neglects the tempting opening afforded him, and merely observes that he "hopes they'll have a smooth passage and all get along well."

That he will "get along well" with Lady May Rivers he feels satisfactorily sure, even on this brief acquaintance.

Meanwhile, Raymond Percival (christened as John Raymond, but always and only known among his own people as "Ray") is dutifully paying his homage to Lady Rockleigh, who accepts it graciously. He has more to say than his uncle Geoffrey—this is not going very far on Ray's behalf—and says it with more apparent interest. He has a winning smile, a bright frankness of manner, and just that mingling of self-assurance and deference which seldom fails to please women, and does not fail with Lady Rockleigh now. There is not, however, much opportunity for cultivating the new acquaintance at the present moment, as a battalion of New York friends here make their appearance, laden with bouquets for the Rockleigh party; and hardly have their floral offerings been presented, when the agent of the company brings the captain to be specially introduced to these his evidently favoured passengers. They are speedily surrounded and swallowed up in a crowd of friends. Lady Rockleigh smiles on the captain, a big, bronzed, splendid old sea-dog, and speaks him fair, while Lady May, her hands full of flowers, is hemmed in by a circle of attentive cavaliers, out of which circle Mr. Carresford quickly drifts.

Lady May Rivers is lovely, certainly; but it is too much trouble to hold his own in the brisk fire of mixed badinage, senti-

ment and travellers' small-talk which is going on around her ; so he falls aside, and presently looking round for his nephew, perceives that young man's brown tweed back disappearing in the distance. Mr. Percival has indeed promptly returned on the track of his unknown beauty, and when Carresford comes up with him he has taken up his post, with his back against the bulwarks and a settled air of remaining there, his eyes fixed on the wide-open door of the companion-way just opposite, on the threshold of which *she* stands, glancing up and down the deck as if in search of some one.

"Hullo, young man, what are you glowering at?" Geoffrey demands in his bluff, hearty way.

"That girl, the one in grey, Geoff," is the frank reply, given in a discreetly lowered tone. "Isn't she——" he pauses for an adjective.

"The one in grey? H'm, not bad-looking," says Mr. Carresford royally. The lady is tall, pale, slender; to his cursory and indifferent glance, hers seems but a cold and colourless style of good looks, he would not go so far as to call it beauty.

For a few moments she remains in full view of our two travellers; then a couple of middle-aged ladies and a young man make their appearance on the scene and surround her with eager greetings. These friends are evidently the objects of her search, and with them she disappears downstairs and is lost to Mr. Percival's admiring gaze.

The commotion on deck and ashore increases as the moment of departure draws near. A bell clangs out the signal that the time has come to separate the chaff from the grain. Until this minute they have been inextricably mixed. Passengers and passengers' friends have herded together in sociable confusion. Now, as the stentorian shout, "All for the shore!" rings along the vessel, a general flutter and hurry stirs the swarming crowd; there is a hubbub of last words, a profuse display of pocket-handkerchiefs, wherewith some "contrive a double debt to pay," wiping tears and waving in parting salutation.

Nobody cries over Messrs. Carresford and Percival; they are on their way back to all the women who are at present likely to weep about them, now that they have set their faces for home, to mother and sisters waiting there. Neither does any one weep over the Rockleigh party, although two or three men linger regretfully to the very last round Lady May Rivers. Ray Percival, leaning over the bulwarks, watching the departing passengers' friends pour in a steady stream across the plank, observes the two ladies and the young man with whom his unknown beauty disappeared from his view pass ashore without her. So she is going across! they will be fellow-voyagers! As he is thinking this, and following these her friends or relatives with his eyes, they turn and wave hands in his direction. He looks round quickly, and a little way behind

him stands the object of his admiration, the tall pale girl in grey. She is glancing along the serried ranks of passengers in front of her who line the shoreward bulwarks, wedged elbow to elbow, leaning over and gazing "with all their eyes;" she is evidently in search of a place for herself.

Mr. Percival pounces on this opportunity as a cat upon a mouse.

"Will you take this place?" he says courteously, falling back to make way for her. She gives him a smile of gracious acknowledgment, a brief word of thanks, as she avails herself of his offer, and he manages to hold his position close to her.

She immediately takes out her handkerchief, and he observes, with an unreasonable degree of interest, that its purpose is not to wipe away a tear, but to wave to her friends, and that she seems quite unaffected by the parting. She is smiling as she waves her farewell to the trio on shore. Evidently, whatever relationship they may bear to her, she is not broken-hearted at leaving them.

Standing at her very elbow now as he does, he can enjoy, without any appearance of ill-breeding or staring, a thoroughly good view of the face that has charmed him at first sight. It is not a face to fascinate any and every man. Not without reason has Geoffrey Carresford mentally pronounced her, on *his* first glance, "cold and colourless." The thick coils of hair rolled up under her hat are of a dead-leaf brown, without any brightening warmth of russet or glow of gold. Her lips are of the paler coral hue, not the more vivid ripe-cherry red. Her complexion, although fine and flawless, is of that smooth ivory paleness which lacks charm to those whose ideal is the transparently fair skin through which they can see the live rose-hues pulse and pale. Her hair grows low in large ripples over a broad white forehead; her grey eyes look out with a calm, steadfast, somewhat dreamy look from under level brows; her features are of the statuesque order; mobility and vivacity are not their characteristics; her general expression, serene and sweet, has withal a touch of pride and seriousness, even approaching sadness. Her face has the clearness, the smoothness, the pure curves of early youth, but that expression is the look of womanhood. It is

"A face that never can grow old,
And never yet has been quite young!"

Yet this pale, calm, colourless face, when once men gaze upon it and feel the spell of its beauty, seems to take the colour out of the brighter, fresher faces near. When once men meet the full look of the deep, soft grey eyes, they are apt to long to fathom those dreamy depths, and sparkling blue and vivacious black seem shallow beside them.

Ray Percival is casting about in his mind for an excuse to address her, an appropriate remark wherewith to initiate an acquaintance, when another passenger, the gentleman on her other side, who clearly is not troubled with the British stiffness and

shyness which occasionally embarrass our countrymen, takes the initiative, and opens conversation by a sociable and friendly observation :

"Big crowd, eh, ma'am ?"

Receiving a smile and a monosyllabic assent in response, he continues :

"Now I like to see a good send-off like this ! Seems to start us well. Been across before, ma'am ?"

Another affirmative.

Mr. Percival ought to be more grateful to this discursive fellow-traveller than he is, as example encourages him to join in the conversation by remarking, what everybody can see, that the gangway is withdrawn and they are "off."

The excitement of the important moment of starting is most successful in breaking down all barriers of form and ceremony ; and in a few minutes he finds himself in full flow of small-talk with his unknown beauty and with the loquacious passenger, who indeed plays the leading rôle in the conversation, as he is alike willing to confide his own feelings, plans, hopes and fears, and to inquire into those of his companions. He gives them a good deal of autobiographical information about his previous voyages, their objects and results, but the lady contributes no autobiographical details at all ; she is quiet and reserved, though not repellent in manner, and all the information that Ray Percival can gather about her is that she is American, but has spent some years in Europe, and that this is her third voyage.

Meanwhile, a dozen yards further along the deck, Carresford has got a place in the front rank beside Lady May.

"What have you done with all your bouquets ?" he asks her.

"You had a whole conservatory full of flowers."

"Some adorn the saloon, and some my cabin."

"The favoured ones ?"

"Are they favoured ? They will be thrown overboard to-morrow, if not to-night."

"Is that how you treat your favourites ?"

"They have their day," she replies with a soft laugh.

"And are thrown over ?"

"What other end is there for—bouquets ?"

"People in poetry and novels treasure up withered flowers, don't they ?" observes Geoffrey, who never reads either a poem or a novel.

"It depends a little on the giver," rejoins Lady May, who is pretty enough and bright enough to introduce little suggestions of sentiment with successful and airy lightness of touch. Mr. Carresford, however, does not rise to this bait, and she continues smoothly, "Dead dried-up roses all look so much alike that if one treasures them in the plural without docketing, dating and initialing them, one gets so mixed !" He meets her arch and laughing

glance, in which an alluring softness always underlies the mirth; he smiles too, and his honest blue eyes betray that he is well satisfied with the prospect of their being fellow-voyagers.

The giant vessel glides, slow and stately, past the long crowded wharves, the last of which stretches out like a huge pointing finger, pointing the way to the open ocean. To the last inch the quays are black with people, flecked with fluttering white of waving handkerchiefs. Ray Percival, carried away by the infectious excitement round him, waves his handkerchief vaguely and vigorously to no one in particular, exclaiming:

"Good-bye to America!"

"Are you glad?" his fair neighbour asks him, with a brief kindly glance from the large grey eyes.

"Why should you think I am glad?"

"Because you are going home. You are English, are you not?"

"Yes," replies Ray, who does not mean to betray by his tone that he would be very sorry to be mistaken for anything else.

Presently, when the black crowd and the white handkerchiefs have all faded into a dull grey blur, the luncheon-bell summons the hungry passengers to the saloon. Mr. Carresford and Mr. Percival find themselves honoured by places at the captain's table, where of course the Rockleigh party are seated, Lady Rockleigh at the captain's right hand, her lord opposite, and Lady May beside her. Next to Lady May sits Geoffrey, then Ray, and next to him, to his great satisfaction, his grey-eyed beauty, who favours him with a recognizing smile as she slips into her revolving chair.

The saloon is gaily decorated with flowers, the long tables brilliant with polished silver and glass; beside each plate lies a gilt-edged *menu* and a copy of that interesting study, the passenger-list. The usual canary swings and sings in his gilt cage to cheer the voyagers. Next day it is probable that for too many of them he will trill and twitter in vain; but to-day, gliding over the placid water of the bay, every one seems happy and lively. The regiment of well-trained stewards run about with military discipline; there is a cheerful clatter of knives and forks, a brisk patter and babble of conversation going on, as friends and families talk together and solitary travellers make acquaintance.

Opposite to the Rockleigh ladies sits a good-looking dark and dapper little man, the Honourable Algernon Vesey, who has attached himself to their party for the voyage; and between him and Mr. Carresford, lovely Lady May is in her element. Ray Percival makes the most of his opportunities with his fair unknown; and perhaps nowhere on dry land is the development of an acquaintance so swift and easy as at sea. So many are the questions of personal and mutual interest on ship-board, that strangers become intimate, the merest acquaintances friends, in a day. Discussing the chances of fair weather or head-winds, comparing notes as to their previous oceanic experiences, Mr. Percival and the

grey-eyed beauty become quite friendly before the day is over—though not so friendly as Geoffrey Carresford and Lady May.

Ray's unknown is of a very different type to the Lady May Rivers; there is a staid self-possession about her, an appearance of *hauteur* which is really only a natural and habitual reserve, which offers a striking contrast to the pretty little widow's easy and fluent vivacity, with its vein of innocent coquetry, natural and unconscious as a child's. Who has not seen a mere baby manifest the feminine instinct of flirtation in its naïve little airs and graces? Some women began coquetting in their nurses' arms, and will only coquette their last with the doctor who attends them in their final illness. It is impossible for Lady May to look with quite the same eyes on a woman as on a man—especially if the man be a good-looking one. Orphaned and widowed while still young, the tears that she has shed have left her lovely eyes bright as ever, and given even an added charm of softness and wistfulness to her smile. The late Rivers, although he was generally considered to be a fairly good match for the Earl of Noland's pretty, but dowerless, orphan daughter, was many years older than she; and his personal appearance was scarcely such as seemed likely to win the first love of a young and romantic girl; thus it was probable that those people were not far from the truth who said that Lady May, though she had lived happily with her husband for the one year of their union, and sincerely wept at his death and worn her widow's weeds even beyond the conventional period, had never known real love nor real grief.

It is evening now, the last of land is lost to sight; the moon is high in the heavens, and the giant vessel glides smoothly over a shining silver sea. All the passengers are on deck, except the unpoetic minority in the smoking-room, who prefer brandy-and-soda and cigars and "poker" to moonlight. Geoffrey Carresford is fortunate enough to be first in the field with Lady May, with whom he is enjoying a promenade, while Ray Percival has seized upon an opportunity and a chair next to the object of *his* admiration. They have struck a congenial vein of interest, and are deep in a discussion on the novelists and poets of the present day. It is a fortunate vein; for she warms to the subjects; their views regarding Tennyson, Longfellow, Browning and Swinburne prove to be generally in sympathy, if not in quite perfect unison; and the stream of conversation is in free and promising flow.

It is a delightful hour to Ray Percival, he has glimmerings of artistic perception of the fitness of things; and it is pre-eminently fitting that on so lovely a night, at the outset of their voyage, he should be in congenial conversation with so beautiful a woman. The moon climbs higher "up the purple walls of heaven," a broad track of silvery light seems to lead them on their way, and point like a promise to the far, far-off land that lies before them. How pure and clear her features look in the pearly moonlight! how

deep and dreamy her eyes ! and as she turns and raises her head, how exquisite is that

“ Pure wide curve from ear to chin ! ”

Ray's admiration is at this stage so purely artistic, so simple an appreciation of what in his eyes seems perfect beauty, that he does not chafe in the least at the utter impersonality of their conversation. As far as words go, he might be discussing Longfellow and Browning with his grandmother—though he probably would not have looked in that venerable lady's face with quite the same eyes. This couple, contentedly absorbed in their literary discussion, attract the attention of another equally contented couple passing by.

“ Who is that lady Mr. Percival is talking to ? ” asks Lady May.

“ I don't know,” Mr. Carresford replies ; “ and I don't think *he* knows either. She sat next him at table ; she's a Yankee, though she hasn't much accent.”

“ She is very handsome, don't you think ? ” says Lady May.

“ H'm, I don't care much for those giraffe women—all long necks and big eyes and hollow cheeks ! ”

This description was in amusing contrast to the opinion which his nephew was at that moment mentally pronouncing :

“ She is just like one of Rossetti's beauties ! Never saw anything quite like her, out of a picture ! ”

Mr. Carresford's disparaging allusion to “ giraffe necks and hollow cheeks ”—an indirect compliment to Lady May, with her soft round curves and dimples and almost babyish bloom—is not lost upon her. She smiles, coyly pleased. She likes those big, fair, strong men, with a kind of Newfoundland-dog gentleness to women and children—likes, in a word, the Geoffrey Carresford type. And, for his part, he finds her—in his own way of putting it—“ very jolly little thing—sort of woman a man can get on with—takes her share of talk, and doesn't leave all the trouble to him ! And,” he adds to those unspoken conclusions, looking down at the dainty, piquante, moonlit profile, “ pretty too—pretty as a picture ! ” So,

“ All goes merry as a marriage bell ! ”

The two Englishmen lounge on the deck in the moonlight, each with the lady of his choice—for the hour ; and none of them dream of the poison-flower, the fatal fruit, of which this day has sown the seed. Insignificant as a little mustard seed, indeed, seem the trivial incidents of the beginning of this voyage—not quite so trivial to Ray Percival as to the rest ; although even he thinks no more of it than that he has seen this day the fairest woman's face his eyes have ever rested on.

CHAPTER II.

FELLOW-TRAVELLERS.

"As for Love, God wot, I love not yet!"

THERE is, comparatively speaking, much less of general sociability and familiarity on board the largest passenger steamers—the celebrated Giants and Greyhounds of the ocean—than on the smaller, yet perhaps not less comfortable, vessels. A certain sense of comradeship, as a matter of course, there must always be on any ocean voyage, amongst the company who find themselves alike cut off from the world, all links of connection severed between them and the land they have left behind and "the land they're going to!"

Ringed round by the unbroken circle of sea and sky, with no point to break the shoreless sweep of the horizon line—with nothing but the record of the log to mark the flight of time or distinguish one day from another—with no letters, no telegrams, no daily paper, there is naturally a feeling of fraternity amongst the passengers thus thrown entirely upon each other for entertainment and interest; but fifty fraternize more than four hundred. When the number runs so high, the members of this large company feel less cut off from the world—carry more of their world and its ways with them. Many hesitate to speak without an introduction; the forms and ceremonies of society are to some extent observed; there is less feeling of *esprit de corps*, and more of segregation. Thus on board the giant steamer "City of Naples," the long list of saloon passengers—so long that half of them could not know the other half, and were scarcely acquainted with them even by sight—bore amongst them much of the essential spirit of that outside world they had temporarily left behind. They asked the ever-burning questions, Who is *she*? and what is *he*? They fell into cliques; and the more exclusive of the cliques regarded the others with thinly-veiled distrust and suspicion.

The Rockleigh party must be excepted; they were not in the least inquisitive nor censorious; they looked upon their fellow-travellers with kindly equanimity, which they could afford to do, standing as they did above suspicion; and if they stood together in a little isolated group apart from the rest, this aloofness was less the result of any intention on their part than the mere working of a natural law. They were perfectly contented within the limits of their own little *coterie*, and although they showed no desire to keep the rest of the company *outside* of this charmed circle, neither did they make any overtures to invite them into it.

They were freely alluded to as "the swells" amongst those of their fellow-travellers and compatriots who regarded them from a respectful distance.

"'Arry" was on board—more than one of him—on his return from a "little business trip." 'Arry was travelling first-class of course; got up regardless of expense, in a fearful and wonderful tourist suit, and giving himself lordly airs with the stewards, who being aware that his regardlessness of expense would extend to their "tips," executed all his errands with alacrity.

His *h's* were not all in the right place, though his heart may have been; he looked at the Rockleights with concealed respect and interest, and talked of them with a magnificent air of ease and familiarity.

Said one of his type to another, who had been seen in conversation with Lord Rockleigh—having given his lordship a light for his cigar and wished him good-morning:

"'Ullo, old man! got up among the swells? Well, I henvy you one of 'em, I do! Lady May, she's a stunner, she is!"

Geoffrey Carresford had expressed very much the same sentiment in terms not very much more elegant; but had he heard this irreverent appreciation of Lady May Rivers' charms, he would probably have desired to promptly punch the appreciator's head. When Mr. Carresford was not in the smoking room, where he spent a good deal of his time in Lord Rockleigh's company, he was generally to be found attached to Lady May's train. So was the Hon. Algy Vesey; so was the veteran, but still splendid-looking, bearded General Peyton; so was the captain, whenever he was relieved for a brief time from his onerous post of duty, and free to be sociable with his passengers. Lady May could monopolize the attention of half-a-dozen men at once, and still have room for more. When the huge vessel rocked on the heavy Atlantic swell, and her place was vacant at the dinner-table, and she reposed on deck in a reclining chair, luxuriously wrapped in furs, very pale and wan, she yet contrived to look even more winning than ever, as her big brown eyes glanced up pathetically from that small pale face, and the Cupid's-bow lips dropped soft words of grateful acknowledgment, as men vied with each other in bringing her grapes and ice, arranging her rugs and running on her errands. Lady Rockleigh also came in for a goodly share of attention. If not the rose, she was near the rose; and moreover was a bright and blooming flower herself, albeit a good deal fuller blown than her fair niece.

Ray Percival paid no more than ordinary courtesies of attention to either aunt or niece. He was devoted to his "Rossetti beauty," who for the first two or three days remained unknown to him, at least in regard to her name, position, status, history—unknown, indeed, in regard to anything beyond her "cold and clear-cut face;" and to his imagination there was something fascinating about this very ignorance of all concerning her. It struck the vein of romance in him which no woman had succeeded in striking before, though several had aroused in him a boyish admiration and

allured a lively and roving fancy which, on each of these successive occasions, he had been rather proud of supposing to be Love. But *this* was quite another thing. It was pure and simple artistic admiration—perfectly calm and impersonal—for an uncommon style of loveliness. So at least he assured himself confidently.

The American beauty accepted his attentions graciously, as far as they went, which was no further than a watchful care for her comforts—a “strong arm and a willing hand” ever at her service when the “rolling wave” rendered such support desirable, if not necessary—and conversation on such impersonal subjects as art and literature, with a smattering of school-room science and drawing-room politics.

She walked and talked with him as freely as Lady May did with Geoffrey Carresford and her other admirers; but these two fair women wore their roses with a difference. The grey eyes which Ray Percival admired knew no lures of coquetry, no side sparkles, nor upward glances from under drooping lashes. Often they looked level into his with a full frank gaze, crystal-pure and clear and cold. She was a woman in communion with whom it was simply impossible to introduce a tone of personal sentiment or flirtation; at least it was impossible to Ray Percival; he would as soon have coupled the idea of flirtation with the statue of a saint. Indeed, it occurred to him that if an artist were in search of a model for a picture of the Virgin Saint Dorothea, here was one. She had a soft blue hood which she wore when the wind was too rough to admit of a hat being kept in its place. Looking at her face, like a white cameo framed in this blue setting, the brown hair a little ruffled on her brow, the deep grey eyes gazing out to sea, with their wide, dreamy look, the little smile just parting her lips, a smile so gentle and sweet, and yet so calm, even to coldness, she seemed to him in feature and expression his ideal of Dorothy the Saint; and in an unguarded moment he admitted as much to his uncle during a cabin *lête-à-tête*. I regret to say that Geoffrey Carresford received the suggestion of the resemblance with unsympathetic and unseemly mirth.

“I say, Ray! I believe it’s a dead-gone case with you. Haven’t seen you so hard hit since little Polly Meekes!”

Ray frowned and flushed angrily at this profane comparison. Polly Meekes and Saint Dorothea!

“Nonsense, Geoff! don’t talk such stuff.” Then, seeing the absurdity of getting angry, he added, with an attempt at turning it off lightly, “If it was a ‘case’ as you call it, every time one saw a good-looking woman, one would be ‘hit’ very often!”

“Well, some fellows *are*,” replied Geoffrey with his sturdy good-humour, which was not very easily ruffled, especially by Ray, who was still and always the privileged “youngster” to him. “Have you found out whether your charmer is maid, wife, or widow?” he continued, comfortably ignoring his nephew’s transient annoyance.

"No," said Ray, recovering his equilibrium, and with it his usual tone of confidence and comradeship. "I haven't even heard her name. Can't pick her out of a passenger-list of four hundred, and about fifty of them unprotected females!"

"They ought to be labelled—ticketed with name and number, age and condition," observed Geoffrey, laughing at his own very mild joke. "But I'm afraid there's no chance for any fellow with your Dorothea beauty, old boy. I think I heard the captain call her 'Mrs.' somebody this morning. Haven't you noticed whether she's got a wedding-ring on?"

"No. She wears a lot of rings, and one can't *stare*," replied Ray, with an involuntary touch of the aggrieved in his accent.

"Well, I think she's a 'Mrs.,'" rejoined Geoffrey. "Still, she might be a young widow; they marry very early over there," with a jerk of his head in the direction of America.

"She might; but it's a matter of perfect indifference to me whether she is or not," said Ray with ostentatious and over-done equanimity.

Geoffrey pursed up his lips in whistling form, but discreetly made no audible comment. After this, to whatever ideals, heroines of history or fiction, Ray discovered resemblances in his "Fair one with the grey eyes," he confided such discoveries to Geoffrey no more; nor did he entertain him by quotations of such passages from the modern poets as seemed to him accurate descriptions of her—and they were many.

They had been out three days when Carresford's irreverent allusion to his classically pure and impersonal artistic appreciation as a "case" had justly aggrieved his nephew's feelings. The next morning, coming on deck, Ray found with displeasure that she was already taking her walk, leaning on the arm of another—of the American to whom he should have been grateful as having been the first means of bringing him into conversation with her at the inception of their acquaintance, but to whom he was not grateful at all. There she was, her hand on that man's arm, walking with him, talking as pleasantly, and looking as content as she did with Ray himself. Had any idiot been blundering out some *mal-à-propos* chaff? he wondered suspiciously, for during these three days she, so far less sociable than the Lady May, had not to his knowledge taken her promenades on deck leaning on any arm but *his*.

He bowed as they passed, looked after them somewhat sulkily, and turned into the smoking-room, where the daily game of "pool" and betting on the "run" was just then in full swing. Ray Percival entered into it with zest. Lord Rockleigh had drawn the number which was generally regarded as likeliest to be the winning one, and there was a lively bidding going on around him for it. Percival recklessly outbid the rest, with the result that the number was transferred from Lord Rockleigh's pocket to his.

It was a bright, breezy morning; the blue sky was dappled with snowy clouds, the blue sea with crests of snowy foam; the great ship rose and fell grandly as she ploughed her way over the long stately swell of the waves; but the magnificent rhythm and swing of that vast slow rise and fall was a little too superb for some of the passengers; and there were fewer on deck than usual at that hour. Looking out from the smoking-room door at the promenading couples who were bravely pacing to and fro, with more or less successful attempts at steadiness, Percival perceived that the pair in whom he was interested had ceased their walk; the gentleman put his fair charge into a chair, took a rug, and tucked it round her feet. Mr. Percival flung away his half-smoked cigar and made his way towards them.

"Good-morning, sir," the American addressed him affably. "There's a good deal of motion to-day. Mrs. Fitzallan is not feeling very good."

Ray had been just long enough in America to understand that the speaker did not intend any reflection on the lady's virtue or amiability.

"I am very sorry," he said, looking down at Mrs. Fitzallan with a little more than necessary solicitude.

"The pitching made my head ache," she said with a wan little smile.

"The fresh air is the best thing for headache," observed the American, giving the rug an extra tuck round her feet, with the natural assiduity of his countrymen when their attention is turned to the care and comfort of woman—more especially when woman is fair to see.

"Yes, that was why I came on deck," she said; "the saloon felt so close and stifling."

Ray, perceiving there was a vacant space beside her chair, promptly fetched a camp-stool and installed himself there.

"It is a trying day," he observed sympathetically; "it is well to keep on deck."

The American regarded him with that frank and friendly curiosity which was merely the natural expression of his chronic interest in his fellow-creatures.

"Are you sick, sir, to-day?"

"Not the least," replied Ray, unreasonably nettled at the imputation. "I am never ill at sea."

"You are fortunate, sir," the other rejoined. "Now I will leave this lady in your charge," he presently added.

"Thank you, Mr. Hitchener," she said looking up kindly.

"For leaving you?" Mr. Hitchener rejoined, smiling with broad delight at his own little joke, which he thought neat, appropriate and in excellent taste.

"No; for your kind care."

Ray scowled slightly. He would have been better pleased if she

had repelled her compatriot's attentions, instead of thanking him for them so sweetly.

"I *am* fortunate now," he observed as Mr. Hitchener turned away. "I did not think I was when I first came on deck and found I was too late and had lost the pleasure of taking you for your morning walk."

It was the first time he had ventured on so personal and complimentary a remark. She took no notice of its flattering tendency, as she replied easily :

"Perhaps it was I that was early, not you that were late. Anyhow, I had my walk, as long a walk as I cared for this morning."

"Is your headache very bad?"

"No, it is much better now, thank you; the air has done it good."

"Nothing like open air," he rejoined.

"Mr. Hitchener is such an advocate for it," she remarked; "he thinks we ought to be allowed to keep the port-holes open at night. I guess we should have a good deal of salt water in as well as fresh air."

"That we should," he agreed. "Our first night out, the steward had not screwed up our port-hole tight enough, and the next morning our clothes were swimming. We should have salt baths gratis if Mr. Hitchener's idea were carried out. His name is Hitchener, I think you said?"

"Yes," she assented. She had a way of dropping simple monosyllables with a certain soft clearness which Ray thought very charming and characteristic.

"Do you know," he added, "I did not know *your* name until he mentioned it just now?"

"Did you not? And are you a sadder and a wiser man than you were yesterday?" she replied with a touch of quiet humour in her smile.

"Wiser, certainly—is a man not wiser for every small item of knowledge?"

"However unimportant?" she suggested.

"And sadder?" he continued. "Well, I don't know!"

"Nor I, why you should be," she remarked. "A name is a convenient handle to a personality, and I consider you should be glad to know the name of any one you happen to be talking with."

"Certainly. I suppose I shall be happier still when I've learnt off the whole passenger-list by heart."

"You will get through a good deal of conversation if you contemplate talking to the whole four hundred."

"I don't!" he said. "I hate talking to strangers."

"Do you?" and her large eyes turned to his with a glance of mildly surprised questioning.

"Yes," he replied, unsuspiciously leaving a blot oper.

"Then why *do* you talk to strangers?" she rejoined, hitting the blot.

He looked a little taken aback as he stammered out:

"I—I like talking to some people whether they're strangers or not." Then he impatiently shook off his embarrassment, trampled it down, looked her straight in the face, and added boldly, "I liked talking to you even when you were a stranger. And I shall always like talking to you when we are friends, as I hope we shall be."

Mrs. Fitzallan smiled. If the young Englishman *would* be personal, she preferred this frank and rather audacious downright-ness to commonplace compliment. It did not embarrass nor annoy her.

"Friendship is a plant of slow growth," she observed pleasantly and easily. "Probably our acquaintance will have no time to grow into a friendship."

"I think it will. I intend it shall."

"Do you?" she questioned again, with a placid, amused smile. Her perfect coolness and unconsciousness charmed and yet piqued him. He felt that no tone save that of frankness, open comradeship, would ever be anything but a failure with Mrs. Fitzallan. He wished and intended to win her friendly regard, and saw that his only chance of it was in a free and candid manner with her.

"Are you going to London?" he inquired, instinct guiding him truly to the expression of just the right degree of frank and easy interest.

"Yes; I am going to join my husband there," she answered as frankly. A step was certainly gained on the road towards friendship; for she added the first personal question she had yet put to him: "Are *you* married?"

"No, I have never yet seen the woman I'd care to call my wife," replied Ray, with unabashed disloyalty to his former fancies, yet not untruly, for indeed none of them had gone to the length of inspiring him with contemplations of matrimony.

Here Geoffrey Carresford interrupted their discourse; he came along the deck casting searching glances around him, and having acknowledged Mrs. Fitzallan's presence by a brief salutation, inquired of Ray "if he had seen Lady May's chair anywhere?"

"You know it's got her name and a bit of blue ribbon to mark it," he added with serious interest.

"I haven't noticed it," said Ray. "But chairs are treated on Communistic principles here. I dare say somebody else has got it."

Geoffrey looked up and down the deck, and surveyed a long rank of reposeful figures in reclining chairs, all packed up from top to toe in many rugs, any one of whom *might* be occupying the sacred chair with the blue ribbon. He could not unpack all, or any, of these muffled-up mummies to search for it.

"Here's a nice chair, cushion and all," suggested Ray. "Wouldn't this do for Lady May till we can find her own?"

Geoffrey thought it would; and went to fetch his fair charge from the companion-way. In a few minutes Lady May Rivers was comfortably installed beside Mrs. Fitzallan, another muffled mummy, a bundle of rugs, carefully packed up by Mr. Carresford, with a very pale pretty face at the upper end of the bundle.

"Is the log posted yet?" she presently inquired. "I do want to know the day's run—and see how much of the voyage we have got over."

Carresford went on this errand with alacrity; and Ray, remembering the number that reposed in his pocket and the price that he had paid for it, followed. He returned about half-an-hour afterwards, a good deal lighter in pocket, as his high-priced number had turned out a losing one after all, but not perceptibly heavier in heart—for Ray Percival was careless of money, as young men of his class are apt to be, those who have little just as careless as those who have much. Geoffrey Carresford, who counted pounds where his nephew could only count shillings, was free-handed and generous enough, but yet less reckless of the shillings than was Ray of the pounds.

If his ill-luck cost Ray a moment's thoughtfulness, it was entirely and for ever forgotten in his satisfaction at finding Lady May and Mrs. Fitzallan deep in sociable converse; they had sympathized in the discussion of the "ills that flesh is heir to" when "on the rolling deep," had compared their symptoms and their treatment, and had now arrived at the more cheerful subject of the novels they were respectively reading.

Lady May had pretty ways and winning smiles for women as well as for men, although when exercised on her own sex they were somehow not quite the same thing nor had quite the same effect. She was not in the least jealous of other women, being far too pretty to grudge their ample meed of appreciation to other beauties; and that evening she graciously remarked to Mr. Percival, by whose side for a wonder she found herself seated:

"Your Mrs. What's-her-name is quite nice."

"She is not my Mrs. What's-her-name," objected Ray. "You mean Mrs. Fitzallan, I suppose," he added a little stiffly; and Lady May noted him down as not half so good-humoured and "jolly" as Mr. Carresford.

"I only meant by temporary tenure," she laughed. "Tenure of a day—by right of walks on deck, and so on."

"Easy terms of possession," he rejoined, catching her lightness of tone. "I think, Lady May, you hold several such properties, on lease, don't you?"

She gave her little soft, sweet, purring laugh again.

"Trespassers will not be prosecuted—on board ship," she said. "When we land, then we give up possession to the rightful owners,

if there are any. *Here*, on the Atlantic, we don't care whether there are any lawful owners or not."

It was the first time that Ray Percival had lingered beside Lady May; and having sat apart in her sole society for about half-an-hour, he was obliged to admit that she was a lively, companionable, pleasant little woman, and very pretty too. Indeed, mortal man could not talk half-an-hour with Lady May without realizing her charm. Still, the laws of attraction belong to the unknown forces; and this soft, alluring, yet vivacious personality of May Rivers exercised little more power over Ray Percival than did Mrs. Fitzallan's colder, paler beauty over Geoffrey Carresford.

Yet as the monotonous days at sea wore on, they all four became very good friends, as friends go, on board ship; they slipped into the easy familiarity of fellow-travellers—into one of those intimacies which nineteen times out of twenty break up and dissolve like mist in the very hour of landing. But there is a twentieth time, when just such a casual acquaintance cuts a channel across a life and turns its whole current.

Lord Rockleigh, who had an eye for beauty, deigned to express a qualified admiration of Mrs. Fitzallan's appearance; and Lady Rockleigh, following her niece's lead, extended a friendly hand to her. Some of the "outsiders" who had not penetrated into the magic circle of the Rockleigh party remarked how "*that* Mrs. Fitzallan had got up among the swells!"—the men generally added that she was very handsome in her own style; the women perceived that it was Mr. Percival who had "picked her up and pushed her on the Rockleighs." "Why, you know, she's just a *nobody*!" they said.

Mrs. Fitzallan went on her serene way, perfectly unconscious of comment, criticism, or envy. She had not the faintest idea that there was anything enviable or noticeable in being "taken up" by the Rockleighs. She was too pure and thorough a Republican, and also in a way too unworldly, to realize the frame of mind of those outsiders who regarded the Rockleighs as walking on a plane apart; still less did she understand those who endeavoured to push themselves into the notice of this exalted "set."

She got on very well with Lady May, though their intimacy never struck very deep root. They skimmed the shallows of such subjects as dress and the drama, fashion and fiction—and I may add poetry to the list, but not politics, which were not at all in Lady May's line; and it was perhaps well that this important topic was omitted, as the fair American's pure and sturdy Republicanism would probably have jarred with the Rockleighs' equally staunch Conservatism.

One day, when Lady May and Mrs. Fitzallan were sitting on deck chatting, the subject of music came up; they discovered that they both sang, and forthwith resorted to the grand piano in

the music-room to try their voices, together and separately. Lady May sang first; she had a sweet and rather weak soprano voice, and carolled a little *barcarolle* very prettily. The sound speedily drew an audience; the Rockleighs came in to listen, so did the Honourable Algernon, and General Peyton, and of course Mr. Carresford, and Mr. Percival, who was always with his uncle and comrade when he was not attached to Mrs. Fitzallan's skirts. Where the two attractions were combined, there as a matter of course was Ray Percival.

It was Mrs. Fitzallan's turn to take her place at the piano. At the first notes of her voice there was a slight but expressive change in the little circle—the polite and pleased air of listening deepened to a more earnest attention. This was no common voice, this contralto clear as a bell, with its exquisite velvety softness and richness of tone. Her tones in speaking were very pleasant, certainly, but had not led her audience to expect the full thrilling sweetness of her song. A professional critic, cold and severe, might have observed that she required more training and practice; the voice, the style, the expression were there, but needed study and cultivation. Amongst her listeners now, however, none were sufficiently advanced critics to recognize any such slight imperfection. As to Ray Percival, the most musical of them all, in the sense of being the most passionately fond of music, he, poor boy, was in no case to criticize. She sang a well-known song, popular and familiar to them all—Tosti's "Good-bye!" and what took her hearers especially by surprise was the dramatic and emotional quality of her voice. From this calm and statuesque creature (the "Snow Queen," as Ray in his latest flight of fancy, in the safe secrecy of his own thoughts, had entitled her) the last thing any one of them had expected was the feeling—nay, the passion, that thrilled in her tones as she sang.

Some latent fire seemed to leap into flame; it changed for the moment the whole aspect of her personality; it was as if through the cold and translucent white of a snow-pure Parian image a red glow suddenly shone, and illuminated it from within with warm, live, roseate light. Was it merely a dramatic quality in her?—a histrionic capacity for rendering the appearance of emotion? Or was it a betraying sign of hidden fires that slept beneath the snow? It was Ray Percival who wondered thus, of course. Without potentiality of feeling could there be power of expression? Could her voice, so smooth and serene in speech, thrill with that impassioned *tremolo* in song, if no passionate, emotional forces lay latent beneath her coldness? he asked himself. By which it is evident that Ray had a lesson or two yet to learn in the world's school.

Whatever the answers to his mental questioning with regard to Mrs. Fitzallan's inner self might be, the one thing certain was that the new aspect lent her a new charm, and she was not allowed

to hide her talent beneath a bushel again. The discovery of a fine singer on board an ocean steamer is a treasure-trove; and in the programme of the usual concert which was of course to take place the last night on the Atlantic, the two most prominent names were those of Lady May Rivers and Mrs. Fitzallan.

The day of the concert dawned a fresh and breezy one; the sapphire waves were tipped with snow; the wind tossed up the spray in salt, strong showers that splashed along the bulwarks.

Mrs. Fitzallan was taking her morning walk on deck with Mr. Percival; the captain had congratulated her on having "got her sea-legs on now;" and she kept her footing bravely on the heaving deck as it rose and sank.

The pair trod their morning round briskly, and were busy discussing a knotty point in a poem of Browning's, until the flow of conversation and the walk were suddenly interrupted by a playful gust of wind which seized and tore off Mrs. Fitzallan's blue hood. Ray saw it skimming along the deck and dashed after it. With the often apparent malignity and mischief of inanimate objects, it flew before him as if endeavouring to elude his grasp; but he captured it at last, just as it was about to precipitate itself into the bosom of the ocean.

Returning triumphantly with the hood in his hand, he wished he might detain it awhile before delivering it back to the position which it certainly became so well. For charming as Mrs. Fitzallan looked in her blue hood, she looked lovelier still without it at that moment. The wind that had snatched it off had also torn away with it a few hairpins, and the rich mass of her brown hair rolled loose upon her shoulders and fluttered in the breeze. Thus loosened from its close coils and falling free in the morning sunshine, a new tone of colour revealed itself in her hair—stray gleams of warm and golden light seemed to flicker and play hide-and-seek amongst that luxuriance of what had seemed till now a mere dead-leaf brown; and those rich brown waves of hair streaming free gave a new softness and youthfulness to her whole aspect too. With the flush on her usually pale cheek, the bright smile, half laughing, half embarrassed, parting her full, firm lips, as the long tresses blew about her face, and she caught and pushed them back with one hand, holding out the other to Ray for the hood, there was for the moment a look of the freshness and radiance, the dewy bloom of girlhood about her, which added just the one needed touch to make her pale and passionless beauty perfect.

While restoring the truant headgear to its place and twisting up the rebellious tresses beneath it, she was quite unconscious of Ray Percival's admiring gaze. One of her great charms in his eyes was her absence of consciousness either of her own attractions or of the admiration they elicited. To be sure, that admiration was generally silent, and as a rule—for Ray's case was quite an exception—of the calm and critical kind. People admired Mrs. Fitz-

allan's large eyes, classic features and pure complexion, but few waxed enthusiastic about her; few paid her compliments; none ventured on flattery. Although she was not in the least like

"A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye,"

Ray sometimes thought, in connection with her, of Wordsworth's "Lucy,"

"Whom there were none to praise,
And very few to love!"

Those lines might have been written to describe her! He wondered whether her name was Lucy; it was a sweet name, and seemed to him well suited to her:

"Fair as a star when only one
Is shining in the sky!"

That night she sang a song he had not heard her sing before—Elizabeth Philp's "Story of a Year." In that simple little tale of "Love and Life and Death," she seemed to pour out a heart full of feeling. From the moment her beautiful voice rose clear as a bell in the opening words to the half-mournful, half-exultant passion of the close:

"Love makes all sweetness in our lives,
And love is more than breath!
They love who live in God above—
We love who still remain!
We breast the storm, the woe, the death—
Then live and love again!"

she sang as if she felt every word in her own soul.

There was nothing much in the simple words, yet they haunted Ray Percival in *her* voice when he went to his berth, but not to sleep.

"Love makes all sweetness in our lives!"

Did she sing so from her heart, or only from her imagination? Was she thinking of her husband as she sang that? and what manner of man was he? For the first time that night he realized that there *was* a real, live, absent Fitzallan! and for the first time the idea began to dawn upon him in the form of a question—was it possible that he was concentrating his thoughts a little too much upon a woman who was to him a stranger—a mere travelling acquaintance—concerning whom all he knew was that she was another man's wife and was on her way to join her husband? He answered by assuring himself positively and vehemently that he was *not* thinking at all too much of Mrs. Fitzallan—that sea life was dull unless one took a little interest in one's fellow-voyagers—that a man *must* "have eyes to see" that a woman was young and beautiful, even though she *had* a husband!

CHAPTER III.

THE FAMILY CIRCLE.

"No fond peculiar grief
Has ever touched or bud or leaf
Of their unblighted spring!"

By one of those curious coincidences—which seem, however, fitting enough when they occur, as they often do, as prelude to a strange story—it chanced that on the very day when Geoffrey Carresford and Ray Percival started upon the homeward voyage which was to be memorable in both their lives, the woman who was allied to them by the closest ties of love and kindred was considering an apparently trivial question, the answer to which nevertheless was fated to exercise more influence over the destinies of these, her nearest and dearest, than she dreamt of then, or for many a day thereafter. She was Geoffrey Carresford's elder sister, Ray Percival's mother; and on the day they sailed from New York, she, three thousand miles off in her London home, propounded the question to the fair quartette whom she generally classed together as "her girls"—although their relations to her and to each other were of different degrees—how were they going to divide that night?

Who was for Mrs. Meyrick's dance? and who was going to accompany her, Mrs. Percival, to Mrs. Houghton's quieter, smaller and less festive gathering?

"To meet the Houghtons' new mesmerist man?" observed Kitty, generally considered the fairest of the flock. "Is it going to be a lecture, Momie dear? Are we to be edified and instructed?"

"You are not going to be either," exclaimed Gertrude Carresford. "Momie, if Kitty doesn't go to the Meyricks', there'll be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth."

"There will be that anyhow. Kitty's path is strewn with scalps," laughed Rhoda; "and she has thrown poor Dicky Dawes over, in the most barefaced way, for little Barnacles!"

"Ah, now, be quiet, girls!" pleaded Kitty, who had the sweetest, most bewitching little *souppçon* of an Irish accent. "I'll go to either party, Momie, so long as I can wear my new pink dress."

But the other "girls" refused to "be quiet."

"Now, you little humbug, you know you're promised a dozen dances deep for to-night," said one.

"Don't you think you ought to go to the Houghtons', Kitty, and study mesmerism? Get up the subject for Barnacles' benefit—it's quite in his line!" observed the other.

"I'm going to Mrs. Meyrick's!" proclaimed Rhoda resolutely. "I'd rather have a good evening's waltzing than meet Mesmer himself, if he was alive."

"Frivolous monkey!" said Gertrude. "Now if I thought he would *do* anything interesting, I'd go with Momie; but I believe it will be all 'talkee-talkee,' and anything in the line of a drawing-room lecture I hate."

"When you girls will let me get in a word," said Mrs. Percival, "I'd propose you should draw lots."

"I'm going with you, Momie," Eileen's soft voice stole in. "I don't think I'm up to dancing to-night."

"And I suppose I had better chaperone these giddy girls," suggested Gertrude promptly.

"Do you feel worse again to-day, Eily dear?" asked Mrs. Percival affectionately.

"I don't believe she slept half-an-hour last night with the pain," Kitty answered for her sister.

"Poor child! She must go and lie down after lunch. Do you feel inclined to go out at all to-night, dearie?"

"Oh, yes, I shall enjoy it," protested Eileen. "I shall like to see this wonderful man."

"That's settled, then," said Mrs. Percival in her brisk, good-natured way. "Gertie, Rhoda and Kitty to the Meyricks', and Eileen with me to the Houghtons'."

"And much edification may she derive from it!" said Rhoda.

"Eily will take an intelligent interest in the subject, I'm sure—which is more than I can say for some of you," retorted Mrs. Percival.

"One for me," laughed Kitty.

"And one for me," exclaimed Rhoda. "We're the feather-headed ones. All our brains are in our heels. Come, Kitty,

'Will you, won't you, will you, won't you,
Come and join the dance?'"

And the two linked arms and fell into an impromptu waltz. They were still whirling round the room, light-hearted and light-footed—and truly enough, somewhat feather-headed too, Rhoda singing a waltz-tune and just beginning to get out of breath, when the London postman's sharp rat-tat resounded through the house. Kate and Rhoda stopped their dance and song, and both made a rush to the door to meet the neat-handed maid who appeared with letters. Kitty seized one letter, Rhoda the other, and Kitty gave a little cry of triumph.

"Here, Momie, here you are! New York postmark! *I've* got it!" And she ran to Mrs. Percival, holding up the letter, which Rhoda playfully pretended to snatch at.

"News of those boys of ours," observed Gertrude, smiling affectionately. "Well, and what news?"

They all drew near to Mrs. Percival as she opened the letter, with a happy, tender look. Rhoda hung round her neck and looked over her shoulder with the privilege of a spoilt child;

Eileen, who was curled up on the hearthrug at her feet, leant upon her lap and craned her little neck with eager eyes, looking from the letter to Mrs. Percival's face.

"Well," said Gertrude, "and are they all well—all right? and when are they coming?"

"All well—and coming home. They sail—why!" with an exclamation of pleasure, "they sail this very day on the 'City of Naples!' Our boys are on the sea *now*, on their homeward voyage!"

The girls all exclaimed gladly at this news. Mrs. Percival looked up at three bright smiling faces, then down on the little pale, upturned face at her knee. Eileen's soft dark eyes grew larger, deeper, brighter, a scarlet flush suffused her usually white thin cheek; she laid her face against "Mommie's" lap with a happy smile.

"How nice!" she murmured gently. "On the sea to-day!"

Gertrude inquired specially after Geoff and Rhoda about Ray; to Kitty they were of equal—and neither of them in reality of all-absorbing—interest. Eileen made no special inquiries, but listened eagerly to every little detail Mrs. Percival read from the letter.

That evening, when this "happy family" circle were all dressing for their respective parties, the house was like a cage full of twittering birds, as the girls fluttered in and out of each other's rooms with a patter of light feet, soft frou-frou of dresses, and babble of laughter and chattering, chirruping voices. They were one and all light-hearted and lively, and though Eileen was delicate, neither she nor any one else made any fuss about it. They were all kindly, sensible people, and not given to pulling long faces—unless indeed anything were wrong with Geoff or Ray! When Eily was ill they were sorry, but cheerful over it; if she got worse they sent for the doctor; and Eileen herself, if a shade quieter, was of just as blithe and buoyant a disposition as the rest. This evening she was especially happy, since that welcome letter had borne the good news that King Geoffrey and Prince Ray were coming home, and she was smiling and singing softly to herself as she arrayed herself in one of those pretty simple white dresses, whose simplicity does not mean cheapness, as the payer of the dressmaker's little account knows.

Although pale and thin, Eileen Dundas was still an attractive girl, if not positively pretty, with her delicate features, sweet sensitive lips and soft dark eyes and hair. Her sister Kate, generally regarded as the family beauty, was very like her, but taller, fuller, with rounder curves, redder lips and rosier cheeks. Kitty was busy donning a gorgeous array of pink china silk and pearl embroidery and rose-buds, by help of which, in her secret heart, she contemplated completing, if it were not indeed already achieved, the subjugation of "Barnacles"—otherwise Dr. Barnabas Grey—her latest and favourite victim.

Rhoda Percival, who was at present in that happy stage of youth when the dance is more than the partner, and any one fairly good-looking and agreeable partner neither better nor worse than any other, was attired in pale blue; and Gertrude Carresford, who was sufficiently the senior of the other three to play at semi-maternal airs with them, and to relish being classed with them as one of "the girls," was in a canary-coloured silk.

"Turquoise, topaz, pearl, and—what can I call you, Kitty?" asked Mrs. Percival, surveying with a satisfied air of possessive family pride her fair quartette. "I can't think of any pink precious stone!"

"Kitty's a flower," said Eileen looking admiringly at her lovely sister. "Queen Rose, of the Rosebud Garden!"

"I'm glad to see our white rosebud has got a colour to-night," said Mrs. Percival, patting Eileen's cheek kindly.

"Oh, she's going to get well now, to be blooming to meet King Geoffrey ten days hence," laughed Kate.

"And Prince Ray!" Eileen added in eager protest.

"Dear old Ray," exclaimed Rhoda. "I do want Ray back. The house doesn't seem half like home without him."

Mrs. Percival smiled at her daughter. She "wanted" her boy badly too. She was good to look at when she smiled, a whole-hearted smile, as warm and genial as summer sunshine; her beautiful blue eyes were as bright as her young daughter's, and had a softer, tenderer light than that vivacious sparkle of youth.

"Now come, girls," she said. "My cab's at the door, and it's time to send for yours. Make haste, Rhoda darling, and get your gloves on."

Whilst the two detachments of the family are on their way to their respective destinations, I will give a brief sketch of the family history and the relationship connecting them all.

To go back a generation—only one, and that only for a cursory glimpse—Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Carresford, having lost several children in infancy, had three left surviving, with gaps of several years between them. These were Mary, the eldest girl; Gertrude, the youngest of all, and Geoffrey, son and heir, who came between these two. Mary, her mother's help and *confidante*, and proud of acting "little mamma" to the younger children, grew womanly beyond her years; she was only sixteen when John Percival fell in love with her. He was in every way a good fellow, as well as a good match; her parents could not refuse their consent to so satisfactory a settlement for their daughter, and could urge no reason for delay, except Mary's youth; but her lover truly argued that she was no child in character, attainments and appearance, if almost one in years. Mary Carresford was not a brilliant nor an intellectual girl; she was of the sweet, sensible, practical, domestic type—the "Angel in the House"—and as her mother used to say, she had the household faculties of a woman twice her age. So Mary was

a wife at seventeen, a mother at eighteen; thus Geoffrey found himself an uncle at little more than seven years old, and, what was more amusing still to them all, little Gertrude, the "baby," was an aunt!

It is difficult to say whether the girlish mother or the grandmother, still in her prime, was the more delighted to watch the little Gertie giving herself infantile airs of instruction and protection with the baby Ray. In the course of a few years came another happy event: Ray's sister, little Rhoda, was born; and then there were no more happy events, but only sad ones for the next decade in the Carresford family. First, John Percival was a considerable loser by the untoward end of certain speculations in which he had too sanguinely embarked. It did not mean ruin, but it meant retrenchment, economy, alteration of their whole style of living. Then Mrs. Carresford, the dear house-mother, died, beloved and mourned; then another heavy blow fell. John Percival, after a lingering illness, also passed away; and Mary Percival returned home a widow, with her two children, to keep her widowed father's house.

Raymond Carresford had adopted two orphan nieces, Kate and Eileen Dundas, his favourite sister's children, and had taken them into his home to bring up with and as his own. Thus Mary Percival had four young girls growing up in her charge, her little sister Gertrude, her own Rhoda, and her young cousins, Kate and Eileen, who came in between Gertrude and Rhoda in age. Gertie's childish name for her elder sister had been "Mamie," and between that and little Rhoda's first stammering attempts at calling "Mama," the pet name of "Momie" had arisen; and thenceforth Mrs. Percival was neither "Mary" to her young sister and cousins, nor "mama" to her daughter, but "Momie," always Momie to them all.

When Raymond Carresford died, some years after his wife, he left Kate and Eileen Dundas to the care of his daughter, Mary Percival; he left, after making a moderate provision for his two daughters, the whole residue of his handsome property to his son Geoffrey, and the reversion, should Geoffrey die without issue, to his grandson, John Raymond Percival, who was, failing Geoffrey, the only boy in the family. Ray's succession, however, seemed such a remote improbability that little or no serious consideration was generally attached to it in the family. Geoffrey, their handsome, healthy, splendid Geoff, in the early prime of vigorous manhood, was not the man to die childless. He was sure to marry, and bring up stalwart sons to succeed him. Still, should he chance to die without offspring, Ray Percival was his heir; and in that case it was Mr. Carresford's wish, expressed in his will, that his grandson should take the name of Carresford.

Although Ray himself did not bestow much thought or care on the remote contingency of his succession to the uncle, who was so

little his senior as to be rather like an elder brother to him, his position as heir-presumptive to the Carresford property was by no means ignored amongst those persons who stood towards him in the relation of creditors; and these, I regret to say, were more numerous than Mrs. Percival knew. She was aware that one of her darling boy's few—very few—little failings was a lack of proper consideration of the importance of due regulation of his accounts. But that was so like his dear father; and then he was young, and his thoughtlessness would no doubt mend with advancing years. In fact Ray inherited expensive tastes, and that sort of lavishness of disposition which is called "royal" in a rich man, and, truly enough, reckless in a poor one.

On attaining his majority, he had come into possession of a small slice of the family property, and there was thus no necessity for him to work for his daily bread. His capital was a very modest one; but he had large and sanguine ideas of doubling, quadrupling it. The multiplying process, however, somehow failed: part of his money went down in a mine, part smashed up in a railway, a part evaporated in a bubble. Still Ray Percival, although he stumbled into pecuniary scrapes, had always hitherto managed to scramble out of them; he was often in difficulties, but had never come to any serious grief, nor brought any responsibility nor annoyance upon his family. Indeed, on the whole, for a young man without the wholesome control of regular employment, a widow's only son and spoilt darling as he was, Ray had given very little trouble at home; and his mother could truthfully declare that on the score of general character and conduct he had never cost her one hour's anxiety.

As to the girls also, the whole four of them, she protested, had never been a bit of trouble to her, except on those occasions when measles and scarlet fever ran through their happy family—or when the increasing number and mixed quality of Kate's admirers caused her some apprehension lest pretty Kitty should make an imprudent match, while on the other hand Gertrude's calm and critical attitude towards mankind sometimes made her fear that Gertrude would make no match at all.

But to return to the Houghtons' evening party, at which by this time Mrs. Percival and Eileen Dundas have arrived.

The room was full when they entered, that is to say all the seats were occupied, and a fair sprinkling of people were standing about; but it was not a crush. The Houghtons disapproved of overcrowding, and deemed a crush especially unsuitable to an entertainment with a purpose, as this was, the purpose being the introduction to their select circle of the professor of mesmerism, the worker of wonderful cures, whom Mr. Houghton had lately discovered. The wonderful cures had as yet to be taken on trust, as the mesmerist was not yet eminent; he had only lately arrived in England, and his was at present a new and unknown name.

This was, however, all the better for the Houghtons should he turn out a success, as then to them, the first to take him up, would thus be due the lion's share of the credit of the discovery. Mr. Houghton had discovered ere now lions who turned out to be only braying in the lion's hide; but this time he was confident that he had got hold of the right man to make a genuine success.

Mrs. Percival, having shaken hands with her host and hostess, and greeted one or two acquaintances, looked round the room with the same question in her mind which the girl at her side presently put into words in an undertone. "Which is he, I wonder?" Her roving glance soon rested on a man who stood near the mantelpiece, the centre of a little group, who seemed to be regarding him and listening to his words with attention.

There was nothing very noticeable about his figure; it was of passable proportions, and scarcely, if at all, above the average height of men. Nor were his features in any way remarkable; they were rather large, firm, and regular enough to give him some claim—though it was not likely to be an undisputed claim—to good looks. But although both form and features belonged to ordinary types enough, there yet was something striking about this man. Few people passed him over without a second glance. His hair was of a hue seldom seen; it was either naturally of a peculiar greyish flaxen, or had turned that shade of grey all over with a wonderful evenness; it was nowhere pure white, and nowhere was there a tinge of colour in it, dark or bright. The beard and moustache were of the same *gris cendré*; they almost concealed a mouth which, so far as its character could be seen, appeared to be firm, close and resolute even to obstinacy. In curious contrast with this colourless hair were his dark eyebrows and blue eyes—strangely deep and piercing eyes of a cold steel blue. In their keen glance, indeed about the whole face, there was an expression of power, penetration, and bold and tranquil confidence, which effectually removed his in no way uncommon features from the region of the commonplace.

Mrs. Percival had guessed that this was the hero of the evening, to meet whom the guests had been chiefly bidden, before she caught what he was saying, which confirmed her in her supposition.

"It is probable that Mesmer himself very imperfectly understood the nature of the force he supposed himself to have discovered. I regard it as certain that he did not comprehend the almost incalculable possibilities which it enfolds. It is the torch that lights up the darkness of nature's mysteries—the key to the occult forces, if we only know how to turn it in the lock."

This sounded very interesting; but just then Mrs. Percival caught sight of a vacant chair—an easy, cushioned chair, which proved to be metal even more attractive. Towards this tempting seat she made her way hastily, lest the fair prospect should be

snatched from her eyes; and she installed herself luxuriously in its velvet embrace, whilst Eileen, girlishly interested, drew gradually near to the centre of attraction, towards whom the host also now advanced, having just got through the reception of a batch of guests.

"Doctor," Mr. Houghton said, after a few casual remarks, lowering his voice as if approaching some sacred mystery, "I think all our little party are assembled now, and I am sure that all would be deeply interested if you could favour us with some little—ah—exhibition"—he felt that this word was an error as soon as he had uttered it, and hastily substituted—"some—experiment?"

"An experiment requires a subject," replied the mesmerist, in the cool and deliberate tones that seemed to be the natural accompaniments of his keen, penetrating gaze. "I do not know if there is amongst this company a person sufficiently sensitive to be subject to the influence, who would be willing to assist me in any experiments."

He looked round slowly, searchingly, and his glance rested on Eileen Dundas, standing near, listening with attentive eyes. He looked at her steadily for a moment or two, and then said to the host:

"Will you introduce me to this young lady?"

"With pleasure," replied Mr. Houghton, and went through the usual formula in an unusually *empressé* manner, as he presented "Dr. Fitzallan" to "Miss Dundas."

(To be continued.)

EARLY ENGLISH GARDENS AND ELIZABETHAN GARDENS.

By MAY CROMMELIN,

AUTHOR OF "QUEENIE," "BROWN EYES, ETC."

1.—EARLY ENGLISH GARDENS.

ENGLAND is, beyond most countries, a land of gardens. Whether the Romans found gardens in the island, after gaining the white cliffs of Albion, seems unlikely. But they certainly brought the art of flower-culture with them, since when it has thriven through successive ages until our landscape gardening has become proverbial. A love of having, every man his own particular garden ground, seems inherent in the English mind; from those which are famous, belonging to stately homes, down to the tiny blooming plots, neatly hedged-in, before many a cottage door.

Even in Anglo-Saxon days there are long vocabularies of the flowers which our forefathers then cultivated. Some of these were herbs only useful to flavour the housewife's pot; others are difficult to identify; while the "rosa" and "lilie" are called by their Roman names, perhaps thereby showing that the southern conquerors brought the finer varieties of these to the rugged British land they so greatly civilized. But of the gardens themselves there is no description surviving. We can only guess from words—those pieces of a puzzle map—a dim outline of what they may have been, the finest probably somewhat resembling a small farm, or even that of a cottage garden of our days.

The Anglo-Saxon names for a garden, *wyrt-tun* (plant inclosure) and *ort-geard* (our modern orchard) tell, at least, of walled or fenced plots of garden ground. Then another name, *leac-tun* (leek inclosure), became the common term for a kitchen garden, while the gardener was the leek-ward. This seems to show that the leek was the favourite vegetable of those days, of which onions (*enne-leac*) and garlic (*gar-leac*) were considered as varieties. Bean and cress are also Anglo-Saxon words; while pea, cabbage, turnip and radish were apparently adopted with their Latin names when the conquering tribes had settled themselves in the "silver coasted isle," to them a land of Goshen.

We may in fancy take a walk on a spring evening through the

apple-tree garden (*apulder-tun*) of an Anglo-Saxon homestead, the wooden-built *ham* with its surrounding bank and fence, and guess that as apples seem to have been the favourite fruit of its worthy lord and lady, therefore many must have been the flowering branches laden with snowy blossom of the two kinds of trees that grew therein; the souring apple and the sweeting apple our forefathers only knew; and of which they brewed their cider or apple wine. Passing out of this apple inclosure, there must have elsewhere been growing plum, medlar, quince and nut trees about the homely dwelling, for the names of all these are pure Anglo-Saxon. Furthermore, they would have pear, peach and cherry trees, for these are spoken of in their chronicles, though with names apparently but slightly Anglicized from the Latin. Perhaps the gardens planted by the rich Romans round their beautiful villas, of which we yet find traces with admiring wonder, had not wholly fallen into wildernesses when the hardy fair-haired Angles and Saxons overswept the land. In these, too, they must have found the chestnut and pine, the small kernels of which latter were eaten as fruit up to the middle ages; the olive also, which they called *ale-beam* or oil-tree. Strawberries and raspberries they apparently met with growing wild as well as cultivated, and knew their fragrant flavour well, not needing to borrow or invent new names for them. And the vine they gladly recognized, or made acquaintance with, as the *win-treow* or wine-tree. Vines were indeed cultivated in the open air in England for apparently several centuries. In later days Giraldus Cambrensis, when describing his birth-place of Manorbeer Castle, near Pembroke, says it had under its walls a fish pond and "a beautiful garden, inclosed on one side by a vineyard, and on the other by a wood, remarkable for the projection of its rocks and the height of its hazel trees."

Of flowers we find from the names quoted that, besides lilies and roses, violets, gilliflowers, marigolds and sunflowers bloomed in our Anglo-Saxon gardens, also honeysuckle and piony, while southernwood was doubtless ranked excellent for its smell; mint, sage and rue were among the pot herbs; and others were esteemed for their supposed medicinal virtues.

All this tends to show that gardens were cultivated in these early times, but it is not till the middle ages that romances and stories teem with allusions to gardens and the joyaunce taken therein. Illuminated MS. are full of queer little pictures of kings and queens playing chess in small paved-in gardens, or receiving courtiers therein; and in the "*Roman de Berte*," Charles Martel is shown as dining in his garden when the rose was in blossom. Imagine the dulness of the grim castles of feudal times with their gloomy stone chambers, so small and cramped and dark to our modern ideas! How glad their inmates must have been to escape from such dungeon walls into the freedom and freshness of the outer world. And how the troubadours and minstrels in those days—wh-

whatever the knights may have felt, were apparently not always hankering after tourneys or battles, nowadays modified into the Englishman's morning desire to go out and kill something—how they delighted in the May-tide and the gay greenwood, when all the earth was full of new and lusty life.

"When shaws * been sheene and shraddest full fayre,
And leaves both large and longe;
Itt is merrye walking in the fayre forrèst,
To heare the small birdes songe."

"Robin Hood."

* Woods.

† Swards.

After a heavy noon-tide dinner, it seems to have been the custom for the elder men to remain drinking heavily or nodding to sleep; but the dames and damozels, the younger knights, squires and lively pages hastened from hall to amuse themselves in the castle, or to "daunce upon the grene."

In the early English romance of "Sir Degrevant," the ladies retire after dinner to "dight themselves afresh," then

"Dame Mildore and her may (maid)
Went to the orchard to play."

In "Blonde of Oxford," the whole party sally forth after dinner to stray and play in the woods, or in the open, then unfenced country.

"Après manger lavent leur mains
Puis s'en vont jouer, qui ains ains,
Ou en forès ou en rivières."

And with them goes naughty Jehan the page, in those merry but licentious days. But as in case of outlaws, or of robber or other ungente knights in neighbouring strongholds, this pastime of wandering far from home may have had its dangers at times, so we find that the garden snugly sheltered under the castle walls was often the favourite resort. In the "Franklin's Tale," Dorigen and her friends bring their victual and other purveyance to a garden near by, where they "play them all the longe day."

"May had painted with his softe schoures,
This gardeyn ful of leves and of floures:
And craft of mannes hond so curiously
Arrayed had this gardeyn of suche pris,
As if it were the verray paradis.

* * * *

Tho' come her other frendes many on,
And in the alleyes romed up and down."

When spring's breath unfolded the leaves from their brown sheaths, the ladies loved to trip down daintily into their gardens holding up their trains when these were worn long. Then, perchance, they would nibble in April the green buds of hawthorn,

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long after called "ladies' meat." The inference may be wrong, yet we read that "primerose buddes and chyknwede" were used for salad. But their chief object would be to gather green boughs and early flowers with which to strew the rushes on their floors. These "sweet strewings" had their appointed seasons, as Herrick later sang. After the rosemary and bays of Christmas-tide, and its holly and mistletoe, the greener box held sway till "dancing Easter-day," to be followed by the crisped yew.

"When yew is out, then birch comes in,
And many flowers beside,
Both of a fresh and fragrant kin,
To honour Whitsuntide.

Green rushes then and sweetest bents,
With cooler oaken boughs
Come in for comely ornaments,
To re-adorn the house."

"Ceremonies for Candlemas Eve."

And of those gathered for the fanciful marriage of Thame and Isis, Drayton makes mention of lavender, balm, mint, "sweet basil rare for smell," camomile and thyme, all of which would, of course, emit their fragrance on being crushed underfoot.

"Amongst these strewing kinds some wild that grow
As Burnet, all abroad, and Meadow wort they throw."

"Polyolbion."

And though these strewings are of Elizabethan days, the armfuls of greenery brought in by dames and daughters of the barons in the reigns of the Edwards were most likely the same. In the romance of "Richard Cœur-de-Lion," what a delicious picture of the spring-time, and its gladness thrilling all nature, is given in these minstrel rhymes.

"Merye is in the tyme of May,
Whenne foulis singe in her lay;
Flowres on appyl-trees and perye (pear-trees),
Smales foules singe merye,
Ladies strowe here bowres
With rede roses and lylye flowres."

Let us seek old Chaucer to gain passing glimpses through his eyes, as it were, of the gardens he was fain to walk in in the fresh spring-time. "Freshe" is his favourite epithet, used again and again to describe the season he loved "of Aperil."

"When clothéd is the mede
With newē grene, of lusty Veer the prime,
And swôte smellen flowers white and rede."

"Legende of Good Women."

And most fresh himself, and jocund of all poets, the old man surely is. How he delights in the May—which word apparently meant more than the mere month, indeed the whole spring from lilac-

tide to summer-time—all the glad renewal of life, sap, joyaunce in this old world of men and women, of trees and flowers, of beasts and birds. He loved his books so heartily that there was "game none" that could lure him from his studies to take a holiday, save only when that in May

"I hear the fowls singe
And that the flowres ginnen for to springe,
Farewel my boke and my devocioun!"

Ibid.

And then this old courtier-poet, the friend of John of Gaunt, this "Father of English undefiled," Dan Chaucer, as he was later called with familiar worship, would hasten to his garden with the dawn, where he would kneel down, as he tells us, in the dew upon the "small, soft, sweet grass," to gaze with ever-new admiring wonder upon—what? Only the small white petals of a daisy that had been close-lapped all night, and was now unfolding to the rising sun. With a very rapture of worship, the poet gazes and gazes again at the golden boss of the little "day's eye," as he tells us it is rightly called. Hear what he says himself:

"My busie ghost, that thursteth always new,
To seen this flower, so young, so fresh of hew,
Constrained me, with so greedy desire,
That in my harte I fele yet the fire
That made me rise ere it were day,
And this was now the first morow of Maie,
With dreadfull haste and glad devocion,
For to been at the resurrection
Of this flower, when it should uncloze
Again the sunne, that rose as red as rose.

* * * *

And down on knees anon right I me sette,
And as I could this fresh flower I grette,
Kneeling alway, till it unclosed was,
Upon the smalle, softe, swete gras.

* * * *

The longe day I shepe me for to abide,
For nothing else, and I shall not lie,
But for to look upon the daisie,
That wall by reason men it call may
The daisie, or els the eye of the day."

And then at night Chaucer—and if he, why not others of that day?—prepares to sleep out at night in his garden, which was probably a small square plot, stocked with sweet herbs.

"And in a little herber that I have,
That benchéd was on turves fresh-i-grave,
I bade men shoulde me my couche make,
For deintie of the newe sommer's sake,
I bade hem strawen flowers on my bedde.

Prologue to the "Legend of Good Women."

QQ 2

This garden would also have a summer bower planted round, like another arbour Chaucer describes, with sycamore and eglantine; for how lovingly he tells of once perceiving

“ . . . so sweet an air
Of the eglantere,”

that certainly he deems no heart can be in such despair but it should soon take comfort if it once inhaled this sweet savour.

Likewise, we may remember his knight, January the olde, who owned

“ A gardyn walled al with stoon,
So fair a gardyn wot I nowhere noon.”

Then again, when the pilgrims have reached Canterbury, the wife of Bath, being weary, says to the prioress: “Madam, will ye stalk privily into the garden to see the herbs grow?” Whereupon forth they wend, passing softly into the herbary.

“For many a herb grew for sewe and surgery;
And all the alleys fair and parid, and raylid, and ymakid;
The sage and the hyssop y frethid and istakid;
And other beddis by and by fresh ydight.”

After which little stroll both dames have agreed to return to their hostess's parlour to drink wine and chat till supper-time. Thus we see that good lodgings, or hostelries, must have had good gardens that were a “sportful sight” to the guests that came thither. Such a mediæval garden seems to have been somewhat like a shrubbery, or left to nature, except for the “beds” of guarded plants that had fences several feet high to keep off dogs. The alleys, as we read above, were kept neatly ordered and railed in. The short sward that Chaucer praises was full of daisies, buttercups and dandelions that were cherished as garden flowers, and knew not daisy-rakes or lawn-cutters. Among garden flowers were also reckoned red and white hawthorn, dogroses, primroses, nightshade, snowdrops, bluebells, violets, periwinkle; and also strangely enough nettles, though the white nettle-flower is not unworthy of being gathered even nowadays. If the garden owned a spring, this would also be diverted into a rudely-carved stone fountain, filled with fish.

In the “Parliament of Birds” Chaucer has depicted such a garden.

“ A gardein saw I, full of blossomed bowis
Upon a river in a grene mede,

* * * *

With flowres, white, blue, yellow and rede,
And cold-welle streames, nothing dede,
That swommen full of smale fishes light,
With finnis rede, and scales silver bright.
On every bough the birdes heard I sing.

* * * *

The little pretty conies to their play gan hie
And further all about I gan espie,
The dredful roe, the buck, the hart and hind,
Squirrels and beasts small of gentle kind."

A garden full of rabbits, of "dredful" or timid roe and fallow deer must have been in fact a woodland park, where in the deep foliage he heard music playing of such ravishing sweetness

"That God, that maker is of all and Lorde,
Ne heard never better, as I guesse."

The garden seems indeed to have been a favourite resort wherein to enjoy the music and songs of minstrels and gleemen. Taking leave of Chaucer, lustiest lover of the May and sweetest singer of spring-time, we find the description of another garden in the "Romaunt of the Rose." This romance was originally written in French by Jean Clopinell, or de Meury, and its English version was long attributed to Chaucer, but is now decided to be by an unknown writer of that date, one of the many disciples of the master. This fair French garden, as set forth in the argument, was designed to protect the red rose of love which grew therein, guarded by Danger and Wicked Tongue. Nevertheless, though the tale is allegorical, the garden itself resembles so much Chaucer's English pleasaunces that we may take it for granted as a description of one of that period embellished by a few fanciful touches. This garden had a high embattled wall "instead of hedge;" the latter being plainly far more usual, except in the case of a rich lord, like the old knight January; and on its walls were depicted in gold and azure all manner of allegories (a fanciful embellishment which may be supposed imaginary, and intended to scare all thieves or false knights from seeking to scale the walls and rob the rose of love).

"The garden was by measuring
Right even and square in compassing.

* * * *

And trees there were great foison,
That baren nuts in hir season,
Such as menne nutmegs call,
That swote of savour been withall
And almandres great plenteo,
Figs and many a date tree.

* * * *

There was eke waxing many a spice
Of clove, gilofre, and licorice,
Gingere and grein de Paris."

The singer's imagination has here borrowed from those Eastern spices and preserves that were brought by outland merchants and used at banquets for dessert—cloves, nutmegs and dates. In such an ideal garden, all should combine to render the home of the

rose paradisaical. But presently the minstrel returns to more familiar ground, telling how also

"Many homely trees there were,
That peaches, coines, and apples bore;
Medlars, plummies, pearres, chasteinis,
Cherise, of which many one fain is,

* * * *

With many high laurer and pine

* * * *

With cipres and with oliveris."

Besides the latter there were also great elms, maples, planes and lindens, with all manner of other trees. These trees were full of leaping squirrels; birds sang in every bough; little runnels of tinkling water made music to one's liking and kept the green-sward fresh as velvet. This sward was "painted with flowers," the violet "all newe," and the periwinkle. Further on,

"Downe by a litel path I fond
Of mintes full and fennell greene."

It would take too much space to enumerate here the sweet herbs that were carefully tended in all the English gardens of that period, either for pottage or medicinal purposes. Among those used in flavouring were violets, daisies, marigolds; with red nettles, heart's-tongue and vervain for sauce. A herbary well filled was truly the pride of not only the kitchen but of the still-room in those days; for all the ladies were leeches, more or less skilled in brewing drinks and cordials made from all manner of plants to cure every ailment. And when any plant seemed mysterious of growth (like the mistletoe, that was called self-heal because of its supposed virtue), or thought to resemble a portion of the human frame, or to indicate in any way the symptoms of a malady—as spotted lung-wort, mouse-ear, adder's tongue, mandrake, and many more—they were all added to the list of herbs gathered with care and incantations by the herb-pickers under the moon's light, or at sunrise. Despite so much superstition, there were doubtless some good and simple remedies distilled from what are now often called weeds.

In that delightful book, "Homes of Other Days," by T. Wright, F.S.A., there are little pictures taken from the illuminated MS. of the "Roman de la Violette" and the "Heures" of Anne of Brittany, which show us gardens exactly representing Chaucer's descriptions. In one, a square garden is surrounded by high walls in which a small door leads to a country landscape beyond. Within the walls runs a hedge of roses, guarded by high trellis work, around a central square plot where a lady and her maidens are making garlands. The other picture shows a dame gathering herbs, perhaps for either poison or love-philtres (as was too common a

practice), and these plants are growing inside the same kind of trellised fence. There are also pictures of knights and ladies, twos and twos, taking the air in gardens as they walk mincingly hand in hand. Our later familiarity of taking the arm for support seems to have been then unknown in polite society. But in the daintier days of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, they held each other *by the finger*; and the saints in Heaven are represented as thus taking the air:

"L'une tint l'autre par les doigts."

"*La Court de Paradis.*"

But of all customs connected with gardens and flowers none was more constantly in favour than the making of garlands. In all lays and fabliaux the dames and damsels seem to spend their summer days thus weaving chaplets to adorn themselves. In Chaucer's "Knight's Tale" not only Emilie but also Arcité, the knight, go out at sunrise to weave themselves garlands. Emilie goes into the garden and gathers flowers "pertye white and rede," whilst the young knight hies into the fields to seek woodbine or hawthorn for a chaplet to set upon his head. The carole was then a favourite dance in which the dancers formed a ring holding each other's hands. Walter of Bibbesworth describes ladies dancing the carole crowned with garlands of the blue-bottle flower:

"Mener karole

Desous chapeau de blaverole."*

* See "The Homes of Other Days," p. 301.

A "fayre quadrant" seems insisted on by Chaucer and other poets as the true shape of a garden. Thus Lydgate (1375-1462) describes his rich churl's garden as being

"Of lengthe and breadthe alike square and longe,
Hegged and dyked to make it sure and stronge."

Lastly, although not strictly belonging to the garden, we may notice the cherry fairs or feasts, which were held with great mirth during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Most likely the jocund English folk gathered together in the great cherry orchards, for the feasts were held when the fruit was ripe. In the reign of Henry IV., Occleve says:

"Thy lyfe, my sone, is but a chery-feire."

And Gower writing still earlier in the fourteenth century thus comforteth his mind in affliction:

"Sumtyme I drew into memoyre,
How sorrow may not ever laste,
And so cometh hope in at laste,
Whan I non other foodé knowe;
And that endureth but a throwe,
Ryght as it were a chery feste."

2.—ELIZABETHAN GARDENS.

THE days were gone by when young knights and fair ladies went into the castle gardens to weave themselves chaplets of flowers, and therewith crowned their heads, as had done stern Roman men in the ages before them. The merry minstrels were long mute, who had carolled so sweetly of taking the air when flowers were blossoming and woods were green, and all the world was young.

"Whan corn ripeth in every steode,*
Merry it is in field and hyde.†

* * * *

The grapes hongon on the vyne,
Sweet is true love and fyne."

* Place. † Meadow.

There is a breath of freedom, of deep woods and wide wolds, a rustle of sunny cornfields and a large love of nature in their singing. After being cramped within castle walls, their spirits exulted in the width and air and sunshine of the outer world, when nature was unbound from winter's grip of cold and snow and frost.

But now England had become more civilized and sedate, and daily life probably far more pleasant. We do not find hints in the Elizabethan poetry that it was any longer a favourite pastime of women to "play all the longe daye" in the garden. Other diversions, more varied occupations, filled up their wider existence. Nevertheless, in good Queen Bess's still hearty age the love of gardens had by no means died out; and in summer weather, when guests were bidden by some cheerful host, the company would very likely dine in the fair banqueting house, set on a mound in the midst of the garden, as Lord Bacon describes it, afterwards pacing in the cool of the evening among the "knotted" flower-plats. Here grew the various flowers cited by Ben Jonson, Drayton, Spenser and others, in long chronicles of sweet names, which are at times, however, mere singing catalogues of the garden rather than poetry.

Take, for instance, a description by Gawain Douglas (1475-1522), which, though earlier than the time in question, is nevertheless a good illustration of this style coming later into vogue; it is also in itself a slight sketch of a Tudor garden :

"The blooming hawthorn clad his prickles all;
Full of fresh sproutings the wine-grapes young
Along the trellis did on twistis hang.

* * * *

The daisy did unbraid her crownal small,
And every flower unlapp'd in the dale.

In battle-bearing blossoms the thistle wild,
The clover, trefoil, and the camomilde,
The flour-de-luce forth spread his heavenly hue;
Rose damask and columbine black and blue:
Sere-downies small on dandelion sprang
The young green bloomed strawberry leaves among:
Gay gilliflowers thereon leavis unshut;
Fresh primrose and the purple violet;
The rose-buds putting forth their head
'Gan burst and kiss their vermeil lippis red;
Curled scarlet leaves, some shedding both at once,
Raised fragrant smell amidst from golden grains;
Heavenly lilies, with curling toppis white,
Opened and shew their crestis redemyte."

How any garden lover nowadays would shudder at seeing dandelion seed-balls, "sere-downies" as is their delightfully expressive old name, raising their fluffy heads in the strawberry-beds, ready to be blown abroad by every passing puff of breeze. But what a quaint touch in the description of morning is that of the daisy *unbraiding* her white head that had been tightly plaited at night, and all the flowers "unlapping in the dale."

Stephen Hawes (1480), in his "Pastime of Pleasures," thus describes a "glorious" garden. La Bel Pucel is sitting therein in a "herber," weaving herself a "girlingonde that is veray sheene." The garden itself is described as being

"Wyth Flora painted and wrought curiously,
In divers knottes of marvaylous greteness;
Rampande Lyons stood up wondrously,
Made all of herbes with dulcet sweetnesses,
With many designs of marvaylos likeness."

Furthermore there was also a fountain "resplendyschaunte." The custom here described of clipping shrubs into fantastic, often barbarous, shapes flourished still more in succeeding years, and later we shall find it alluded to by Lord Bacon.

This garden of La Bel Pucel was also "fayre and quadrant," as a matter of course.

Our ancestors in Queen Elizabeth's days seem to have had two leading ideas concerning gardens. The first was, that these should be conformed in some degree to the architecture of the house to which they were attached; therefore either a square or an oblong, in any case a rectangular shape was necessary to its stiff stateliness. The second canon ordained that every inch of this space should be filled with flower-plats, hedges and alleys, the latter often pleached closely overhead by means of interwoven roses or creepers. In this portion of the garden not an inch of sward was left, although in adjoining portions of the pleasure-ground the Elizabethan taste approved also of greens, mazes, pleasaunces and what Lord Bacon calls heaths or wildernesses.

The flower-beds called "knots" were all laid out in precise

geometrical patterns. Nature, who had been still wooed to pre-
side as mistress in the half-woodland gardens Chaucer sometimes
described, was now clipped and tutored and kept everywhere in
close bounds by man's art. Shakespeare refers, in "*Love's Labour
Lost*," to this prevailing fashion of stiff designs in flower-beds:
"In the west corner of thy curious knotted garden." And Milton,
later, with what seems rebuking comparison, refers to the same
taste, that still held ground. When describing the garden of
Eden, he tells us that there grew

"Flowers, worthy of paradise, which not nice art
In beds and curious knots, but nature born
Pour'd forth profuse on hill and dale and plain."
"*Paradise Lost*."

Truly Adam, "the grand old gardener, and his wife" would have
been much surprised at such a stiff kaleidoscopic arrangement of
flower "knots," surrounded or intersected by hedges trimmed with
constant care, and here and there clipped and twisted into a
griffin, or an impossible bird, or a set of chess pieces. These
hedges still survive in some old gardens, curiosities of bygone
pains and skill; living links between the dead generation, that
rustled past them in courtly ruff and farthingale, and ourselves,
who saunter by in easy nineteenth century carelessness, wondering
at such freaks of taste.

The Elizabethan men and women had no small knowledge of
flowers, judging even only from old Gerarde, the herbalist, who
lived towards the latter end of the sixteenth century. He seems
to have had friends, or employed agents, on the continent, who
supplied him with any plant new to British soil, and since
Chaucer's days many more had been added to the list of our gar-
den denizens. The following description of a garden by Phineas
Fletcher shows a great advance from the days when buttercups,
dandelions, daisies and white nettles were reckoned as worthy
of care as well as love.

"The rose engrained in pure scarlet die,
The lilly fresh and violet belowe,
The marigold and cheerful rosemarie,
The Spartan myrtle, whence sweet gum doth flowe;
The purple hyacinth and fresh costmarie,
And saffron sought for on Cilician soil,
And laurell th' ornament of Phœbus' toil.

"Fresh rhododaphne and the sabine floure,
Matching the wealth o' the ancient frankincense;
And pallid ivie, building his own bowre;
And box, yet mindful of his own offence,
Red amaranthus, luckless paramour,
Ox-eye, still green, and bitter patience
Ne wants there pale narcissæ, that in a well
Seeing his beaultie, in love with it fell.

"The hedge green satin, pink'd and cut, arrays;
The heliotrope unto cloth of gold aspires;
In hundred coloured silks the tulip plays:
Th' imperial flower his neck with pearl attires;
The lily high her silver program rears;
The pansy her wrought velvet garment bears;
The red rose, scarlet, and the Provence damask wears."

Giles Fletcher (1584-1623) describes a garden that truly seems strangely devised, but no doubt he was accurately showing the taste of the time:

"The garden like a lady fair was cut
That lay as if she slumbered in delight."

To represent the azure vault of heaven above her head, this was "sembled" by a large round flower-bed, set thick with flower-de-luce. Red and white roses were planted to set forth her complexion, and

"For her tresses marigolds were spilt,"

which latter were figured to be caught up and held in check by green fillets—can these have been low hedges, or box borders? This floral dame was likewise fashioned to appear leaning her head upon a hilly bank, "on which the bower of vain delight was built." Perhaps this last allusion may be explained by what Lord Bacon says of the frequent custom of placing a little temple or arbour on an artificial mound in gardens. The whole must have been to our modern thinking a childish conceit, curious rather than pleasing. Like the former constant weaving of garlands, so the gathering of sweet "strewings," or flowers and branches to decorate the house, seems still to have survived in Elizabethan days; but even according to Herrick, that lover of old customs and most merry priest, the latter practice seems to have been now chiefly kept on feasts and holidays. Yet in Elizabeth's golden age flowers seem to have been invested with new meaning, and to speak in poetic speech to the minds of even common folk; this is a new form of the love in which they were held by the English, which does not appear in the pages of earlier writers. Shakespeare is full of allusions to such a symbolism that was a real and living language of flowers, now a dead tongue, a hollow sham, mimicking feebly the old beautiful reality.

Take rosemary first. Our Elizabethan ancestors connected it with chastity and remembrance; and the "cheerful" plant, as Spenser calls it, was always seen at weddings and burials. Thus in the old ballad of the "Bride's Good Morrow:"

"Young men and maids do ready stand
With sweet rosemary in their hand—
A perfect token of your virgin's life.
To wait upon you they intend
Unto the church to make an end:
And God make thee a joyfull wedded wife."

And Shakespeare has :

“Marry come up, my dish of chastity with rosemary and bays ;”

while Herrick sings to the rosemarie branch :

“Grow for two ends, it matters not at all,
Be’t for my bridall or my buriall.”

It was an old custom to place a sprig of rosemary in the hand of a corpse, as a last “In Memoriam,” and sprigs of it were also scattered on the coffin and planted on the grave ; when, if a shower of rain refreshed the slips soon after planting, it was deemed a happy omen of the future state of the deceased.

“Blessed is the corpse which the rain rains on.”

Sir Thomas More “lett rosemarine run alle over his garden walle” because it was sacred to memory and therefore to friendship, as also because his bees loved it. And in the Elizabethan collection of ballads called “A Handful of Pleasant Delites” we find :

“Rosemarie is for remembrance
Betweene us daie and night,
Wishing that I might alwaies have
You present in my sight.”

Lastly comes poor Ophelia, distributing the flowers of her posy and saying, with perhaps some glimmering of her own tragic death so near :

“There’s rosemary, that’s for remembrance ; pray you, love, remember : and there is pansies, that’s for thoughts.”

Again, rue (or herb of grace), because of a likeness of name, was taken as the symbol of ruth or repentance. And, repentance being a blessed sign of grace working in the human heart, rue became by a sequence of ideas “herb o’ grace ;” which beautiful old name was afterwards vulgarized into herbigrass. To quote Ophelia again :

“There’s rue for you ; and here’s some for me—we may call it herb o’ grace o’ Sundays—you may wear your rue with a difference.”

And again the gruff but pitiful old gardener in “King Richard II.” says, as the queen leaves the spot where he has been ordering the binding up of the dangling “apricocks :

“Here she did fall a tear ; here in this place
I’ll set a bank of rue, sour herb o’ grace :
Rue, even for ruth, here shortly shall be seen,
In the remembrance of a weeping queen.”

Violets, too, then had a deeper meaning than that of mere nun-

like shyness, which is all most modern poets have seen in them. Thus we find :

"Violet is for faithfulness
Which in me shall abide;
Hoping likewise that from your heart
You will not let it slide."

Clement Robinson.

Fennel signified apparently a want of truth, and poor Ophelia gave these and columbines away perhaps with method in her madness. Tuberville writes to his suspicious love on her sending him some flowers :

"Your fennel did declare
(As simple men can show),
That flattery in my breast I bear,
Where friendship ought to grow."

And Browne tells us of the columbine,

"The columbine in tawny often taken
Is then ascribed to such as are forsaken :"

Here follows a little pastoral courtship in flowers, fit for fair shepherdesses and their swains :

"He to his lass his lavender hath sent,
Showing her love and doth requital crave;
Him, rosemary, his sweetheart, whose intent
Is, that he her should in remembrance have,
Roses his youth and strong desire express;
Her sage doth show his sovereignty in all;
Thyme, truth."

Drayton.

Lastly, "lad's love" was the old name for southernwood.

Leaving these symbolical posies, let us consult finally the best of all authorities on Elizabethan gardens, Lord Bacon himself, than whom none has ever written a more delightful essay on Adam's occupation—beginning thus: "God Almighty first planted a garden; and, indeed, it is the purest of all human pleasures." And again he says, "Men come to build stately, sooner than to garden finely, as if gardening were the greater perfection." Beginning in lordly style he enjoins that for the royal ordering of gardens there ought to be one for each month of the year. Thereupon he cites a profusion of flowers for each season, a knowledge in which, however, he was almost equalled by the poets of his day; for Ben Jonson, Drayton, the Fletchers and many more seem to have prided themselves in quoting as many flowers in their lines as ever bloomed in the old-fashioned knots of their gardens. "And because the breath of flowers is far sweeter in the air (when it comes and goes like the warbling of music) than in the hand, therefore nothing is more fit for that delight than to know what

be the flowers and plants that do best perfume the air." Roses, damask and red, hold fast their smells, he says, even in a morning's dew; but best of all flowers for smell is the double white violet, next the musk-rose. Then he cites "the strawberry leaves dying with a most excellent cordial smell;" next, the flower of the vines, which he likens to the little dust of bent-grass. After these, which seems strange, come such strong-smelling flowers as wall-flowers, pinks, &c., while he recommends that whole alleys should be set with thyme, burnet and mint, which, when crushed underfoot, perfume the air delightfully. Have any of us, nowadays, noticed this smell of dying strawberry leaves, which Lord Bacon prefers to honeysuckle or sweetbriar? Other writers besides myself have been puzzled by it; and as a child I remember straying on mellow autumn days beside the strawberry-beds, sniffing vainly at the decaying leaves and wondering what the great philosopher meant. I had been given an old small copy of his *Essays*, bound in black leather, its pages yellow with age, and into this I dipped with all the pride and eagerness of a discoverer, imagining few besides myself could ever have read so old a book, and studying with especial delight his fancied noble palace and gardens in the essay on gardening.

Lord Bacon liked the pleasure grounds to be divided into three portions. That next the house was a green, "because nothing is more pleasant to the eye than green grass finely shorn." This was to have covered alleys for shade on either side leading to the garden. "As for the making of knots, or figures, with divers coloured earths, that they may lie under the windows of the house on that side which the garden stands, they be but toys; you may see as good sights many times in tarts. The garden is best to be square, encompassed on all the four sides with a stately arched hedge." These arches were to be about fourteen feet high, with the lower portions of hedge between just the same width as the arches. Over every arch should be a little turret to hold a cage of birds, and between the arches "some other little figure, with broad plates of coloured glass gilt for the sun to play on" (these, or metal globes, that glitter in the sunlight, are still favourite ornaments of gardens in Holland). For the interior of the garden Bacon advises this should not be too bushy or full of work. As for "images cut out in juniper or other garden stuff, they be for children. Little low hedges, round like welts, with some pretty pyramids, I like well." In the very middle he wished a fair mound, thirty feet high, with three broad ascents and alleys (the latter apparently encircling it), and on the top of this was to be a fine banqueting house, with neat chimneys and not too much glass. He also gives precise directions. The fountains should be kept freshly-flowing and clear, and adorned (as usual, he adds) with gilt or marble images. Also there should be a bathing-pool, finely paved, and embellished with coloured glass or things of such lustre, and

surrounded by low rails and statues. There were also to be fruit trees and arbours in this garden.

For the third and furthest portion of ground it was to be a heath, imitating a natural wildness. "Trees I would have none in it, but some thickets made only of sweetbriar and honeysuckle, . . . and the ground set with violets, strawberries and primroses. . . . I like also little heaps, in the nature of mole-hills (such as are in wild heaths), to be set, some with thyme, some with pinks, some with germander." And on the top of these little mounds he advised standard bushes of red currant, gooseberry or rosemary should be pricked in; but kept small with cutting.

And herewith I take my leave of Lord Bacon, and of Elizabethan gardens.

RED ROSES.

By MRS. ALEXANDER FRASER.

AUTHOR OF "PURPLE AND PINK LINEN," "A LEADER OF SOCIETY," "THE MARCH OF THE SEASON," ETC., ETC.

PART I.

THE HONOURABLE MISS CLIFTON.

LONDON in the season, dusty and glary, and with a temperature of ninety degrees in the shade, but possessing with all these drawbacks immense attraction for the pleasure-loving, excitement-seeking million, to whose taste the crowded balls and receptions and Row are a thousand times more in consonance than all the beauty that nature ever showed. Fashion holds her court, and her votaries flock obsequiously around loth to quit the charmed circle, till forced to do so by the mandate of their imperious duty.

But though the glitter and gaiety have many worshippers there are some few human creatures who are capable of perceiving the real hollowness and falsity of "the season." Some few human creatures who can trace a mask for an aching heart in the smile that wreaths beauty's lip, and who can detect an empty purse and even a hungry pang beneath a coat that is a *chef d'œuvre* of a Conduit Street or Bond Street tailor. But these discerners are people who have lived long in the world, who have felt its knocks and brunts, and who have learnt by experience that according to the preacher "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." Alan Harcourt, one of our youngest colonels in a crack Guards' Regiment, happens to be one of the brotherhood of sceptics in genuine enjoyment, as leaning at a window of a big house in Brook Street, his gaze rests wearily on the incessant stream of passers-by to the park.

His thoughts at this moment are certainly not cheerful, and this may possibly impart a more jaundiced aspect to life than it usually wears. As he stands in a listless attitude, the glare of noon falls full on him, but fails to lighten the shadow on his brow.

He is a tall man, broad-shouldered and carrying himself haughtily as a rule. And he has a quiet earnest face that owes its attraction to a pair of deep honest eyes, and a smile rare and grave, but just the sort of smile women find irresistible.

At the furthest end of the room, lounging idly upon a sofa, is the woman he loves.

Her hands, white, small, aristocratic, and gleaming with jewels, toy with a large fan. Her form is slender, and she has a lovely sparkling face and red lips that laughter and sneers alike become.

Her dark grey eyes are apparently bent on the ground, but from under the black curling lashes she casts frequent glances at her companion, while an expression triumphant and even mocking crosses her mouth as she marks evident signs of indecision about him.

She is the Honourable Cecil Clifton, she is the belle of the season, and she has been engaged to this good-looking Guardsman for one year.

"And it is really your determination to break with me, Cecil?" Harcourt says after a long silence, but less in a tone of interrogation than as if he was speaking in a dream. His eyes go out eagerly and pleadingly towards her, but her head is studiously averted.

"It is!"

There is not the faintest falter in the well-modulated voice, not a symptom of softening, no quiver on the proud red lips, and Harcourt feels his heart sink down like a lump of lead as he strives vainly to read a line of relenting in the exquisite face that has grown dearer to him than life. It is true he can only judge of her feelings by the surface, and that is as hard and cold as marble, or perchance the rapid throbbing of her heart beneath her muslin bodice, and the icy coldness of her fingers, nervously marring the beauty of her fan, might prove panaceas for the pain he suffers, and which blanches his features, and makes existence utterly valueless in his eyes.

Cecil's downcast glance is genuine enough now; not for worlds would she meet her lover's look, aware that by doing so she will imperil the carrying out of her resolution. Her cheek flushes and pales alternately, but this is the only sign of perturbation in her breast, and Harcourt, utterly unable to sustain silence or calmness longer, crosses the long room with rapid strides and kneeling before her clasps her hands tightly in his own.

His voice is very low and broken, and listening to its tones no one could doubt how precious to him is the suit he presses.

"Listen to me, Cecil, darling Cecil! I can't believe you yet! I *can't* bring myself to credit that you can cruelly, heartlessly, ay, even wickedly wreck a man's whole life as you are doing now for a mere chimera of the brain, a miserable folly! No! don't turn away from me, but hear at any rate what I have to say, and even if I fail in shaking your resolve, let me, Cecil, for the last time tell you all that is in my heart; the vilest criminals are allowed to plead for dear life, and surely I may be allowed equal privilege with them!"

His accents grow less brave and firm each moment, but nerving himself up he tries to go on.

"For twelve months, Cecil, we have been engaged, you have been

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my only thought by day, the woman whose face has hovered near me in my dreams by night. To say that I *love* you would be untrue, for love in the common acceptation of the word is pale and faint and mean in comparison to what I feel, Cecil! Mine is worship, I believe, and not love! Yes! you may smile at the bare notion of one so quiet, prosaic as I am being capable of such a feeling, but you have yet to learn that it is natures like my own—slow to move, unimpressionable as a rule, cold and hard if you will—that once aroused into passion, yield up that passion only in death.”

His words are eloquent with feeling, and sincerity shines out of his earnest eyes, but neither words nor eyes have power to touch the woman he loves.

Like a statue she sits and listens, but the lovely white arms that have been wont to steal round his neck remain motionless, and the mouth that has whispered softly in his ear is mute.

“Cecil! I pray you think of the misery you are dooming me to. Think of the past time when loving words have fallen from your lips and your sweet eyes have looked into mine. Child, pause before you decide, and don’t play with a human heart as with a football. You’ll grieve when I am gone, Cecil! And your heart will yearn for the love that is past, will consent to a prayer gone by. Recall your determination, or I shall think your reasons for throwing me over are not the real ones. I shall believe, Cecil, that some one has come between you and me!”

“Miss Montessor.”

And as she speaks the name there is a harsh jar in her tone, and her lips curl.

Harcourt starts up from his knees and lets go the hands he holds.

For an instant anger and impatience are the chief expressions on his face, but they quickly pass away leaving a weary and hopeless look behind them.

This bright summer’s day has brought him a deal of unhappiness and vexation as well. He has been grappling with unreasonable fancies, vainly trying to argue with her, and striving hard to ignite a spark of right feeling in her bosom on the subject of contention between them.

Jealousy, and a jealousy that is more difficult to combat for the very reason that it is utterly groundless and wild, has taken root within her, and all his arguments are futile to eradicate it.

But he loves her passionately, and he cannot bear to let her drift away from him without a desperate struggle to keep her. The name she uttered has made her face cloud darkly. All the sparkle has died out of it and a hard sullen line runs round her mouth, whilst on the long black lashes tears, evoked by the green-eyed monster, glisten brightly in spite of her efforts to keep up an indifferent exterior. These tears are Harcourt’s forlorn hope. They show at any rate that he yet has some power over her. So he sits down beside her, but the arm that creeps round her waist

is put aside impatiently, and she shrinks away from him. Harcourt feels the movement more than sees it, and brave strong soldier as he is, it tortures him so that he could cry like a child.

Hitherto the path of love has been smooth for them, but now a gigantic struggle has arisen, and Cecil or conscience are at stake. As he sits drinking in with rapt gaze the beauty that his soul as well as his eyes worship, he feels love mighty, omnipotent, overweighing the balance. What on earth could make up to him for the woman he loves to distraction? And a little while, and sooner than give up the blessed hope of possessing her, he would have yielded to her wishes and lost his own self-respect, but shaking off the glamour she has for him, and collecting his failing strength, he resolves to follow the dictates of honour and give up love.

"Cecil! You know quite well that Phyllis Montessor can in no way interfere between you and me. You *know* that you have all my heart, and that the affection I give her is that which a man gives to a young sister. My whole soul is yours, and it will be a death blow to everything to lose you; but I swore on my knees at the bedside of Phyllis Montessor's dying father that with God's help I would befriend his child, and here, Cecil, once again, although you may cast me off, I reiterate that solemn oath!"

She starts up from her seat and looks at him with flashing eyes out of which all tenderness is gone. Her cheeks are aflame, and her fingers clutched together in anger and agitation.

"Enough, Colonel Harcourt! You need say no more! It is you who have decided the future by choosing between Miss Montessor and me. I would not be your wife for all the world, with the prospect of a presence I hate, a girl I distrust shadowing my hearth and destroying the happiness of each hour of my life. I *have* loved you dearly, but I do not love you now! No divided heart for me! The man I marry must be all my own, and I'll have no interlopers in my home. Sooner than give up the unspeakable happiness of watching over Miss Montessor's welfare you prefer to place an eternal barrier between us two. So be it! You have *never* loved me, and I have been a fool to believe you did," and she sweeps haughtily past him towards the door.

Harcourt seizes her arm and arrests her steps, and glancing hastily at his white face and working features, she pauses.

"I have chosen between you and duty, Cecil! No woman on earth could take me from you, but I feel that even with you as my wife I should be an unhappy man, with conscience reproaching me perpetually for having perjured the vow made to a dying friend. I cannot send his child into the world unprotected, even though her presence will recall each moment the memory of her I have worshipped and lost. But, oh, Cecil! my life, my love! if you *will* send me from you, don't let it be in anger, but rather in pity and regret, that to preserve honour I have to yield up all that could make earth *Heaven*. Speak to me, child. Lay your

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lips just once more on mine, and bid me go if it must be, but let me carry away one loving look. Let your voice fall kindly once more on my ears."

Not one glance; not one word. The dark grey eyes glitter, but there is no soft light in them, and Cecil Clifton's white teeth press down on her lip so that its trembling shall not be seen.

Alan Harcourt pulls himself up to his full height and confronts her. For a minute or two he seems to study feature by feature of her face with a strange and wistful expression on his own countenance, but the study is unsatisfactory. Cecil's face, like her heart, seems to have suddenly become a sealed book to him.

"Good-bye!" he says brokenly, "and if prayers of mine can avail, you will be a happy woman, Cecil. You know best if you are acting for your happiness, and in spite of all I suffer, I sincerely hope you are right. But if at any time," and he bends towards her while his tone grows softer and his lips quiver, "when your judgment is cooler, and reflection shows you how cruelly you are punishing me for a mere fancy, Cecil, write to me and I shall be at your feet."

"I shall never write to you," she answers curtly.

"Then promise me one thing. It is the last request I shall ever make you. If anything should happen to me, if I should be dying perchance, when you get a bunch of red roses, you will come to me? It is only a fancy of mine, a sickly sentimental fancy, some men would think; but, nevertheless, promise me that you will accede to what I ask!"

"I promise."

He looks at her steadily a moment, then without one backward glance leaves the room.

"Alan! forgive me; come back!" she cries, and with tears blinding her eyes she rushes to the door and then to the window, but only in time to see Harcourt's tall figure turn quickly down a quiet by-street.

It is all over—he is gone—and she is sure that he will never come back to her, so she goes back to the sofa, and burying her face in the velvet cushion, sobs like a child.

The sudden opening of a door behind her rouses her and stills her sobs. For an instant she fancies Harcourt has returned, but the sight of her mother's figure sends the blood surging over her face, and ashamed of the emotion she has given way to, she averts her head and feigns to read.

But Lady Estcourt's shrewd glance detects the traces of tears at once, and anxious to discover if a serious rupture has occurred between Cecil and her lover, she forgets her usual circumlocution, and questions pettishly:

"Where is Colonel Harcourt?"

"Gone!"

"Gone!—where?"

"I don't know."

"When does he return?"

"*Never!*" and with this ominous word sounding a death knell to all her hope and happiness, Cecil bursts into a torrent of tears, and makes no effort to hide them.

The desire of Lady Estcourt's heart is fulfilled. To break off the engagement between her daughter and Harcourt has been the end and aim of her life for some time, but she has hardly known how to set about its accomplishment. Harcourt is neither affluent nor aristocratic enough to please her, and personally she dislikes him. She is a thorough woman of the world, full of wiles and deception that to Harcourt's honest nature are detestable, and though he forces himself to be civil to her, he cannot disguise his real sentiments always.

Lady Estcourt has repined that her daughter, beautiful and wealthy, should draw so poor a prize in the lottery of marriage, so while Cecil weeps, her mother smiles quietly and complacently.

"I have noticed for some little time that your manner to Colonel Harcourt has been cold. Cecil, what has he been doing to anger you?"

"I am not angry with him in the least," the girl says with a deep sigh.

"Then it is jealousy! You are jealous, of course! and of that Miss Montessor, and who can wonder at it? It is very seldom that such affection as Colonel Harcourt evinces for a girl like Miss Montessor—an actress, too—is purely paternal or fraternal, or whatever he may call it! especially when he must be gratified by the excessive fondness the young woman so openly demonstrates for her 'guardian!' A guardian is such a safe name, you know. Loving you as I do, my dearest Cecil, I confess I have been most unhappy at your unfortunate entanglement. The fact is you are much too pretty and admired to be made the recipient of a divided heart."

Cecil winces under this thrust. It is just a repetition of her own words to Harcourt.

"Why should Colonel Harcourt profess to care for me if he loves another?" she asks petulantly.

"Colonel Harcourt, caught by your beauty, doubtless fancied himself in love with you, and when he found his liking returned tenfold, of course both honour and pity forbade his breaking his word until some good opportunity for release offered. Your jealousy has made that opportunity, and probably salving his conscience with the thought that it is *your* fault a rupture has occurred, he has gone away feeling a free and happy man again!"

Cecil trembles with passion as she listens, and for a moment Harcourt is a really miserable man, for the woman he loves so passionately, *hates* him.

"*Pity* made him keep his word to me!" she ejaculates in a hard metallic voice, and she plucks from her bosom some red roses that Harcourt had given her a few days back and stamps on them.

"Colonel Harcourt shall not have my unhappiness to lie as a burden on his conscience! As long as I believed in his love I gave him mine, but hearts, thank Heaven, are not brittle like glass, to be broken at a man's will. There, mother, 'Richard is himself again.' I shall never be Cecil Harcourt now, so prepare yourself at once for the onerous task of finding a titled husband for your daughter. I give you fair warning that nothing but strawberry leaves will satisfy me!"

Cecil's sudden liveliness does not deceive such an old stager as Lady Estcourt, but her cue is to believe in it.

"I *am* so glad to find that your attachment to *that* man is not so strong as I feared. There are such a lot of men about town more eligible than he is, and you will soon like some one else a thousand times more than you imagined you loved him!"

"Never!" Cecil mutters. The day is growing on, the sun is getting lower, and yet she lingers near the window in her morning attire, and with her hair pushed unbecomingly off her hot temples.

"Cecil, I think it is getting late," Lady Estcourt murmurs presently. "We have some people coming to dinner, you know."

But Cecil absorbed in her own thoughts does not hear a word.

"Cecil! I believe Sandilands is going to dine here. Do you intend to stand there all night fretting for a man who does not care a fig for you, instead of making yourself presentable to other people?"

"For other people—read Duke of Sandilands," Cecil answers with a sneer. "All right, mother:

'Tis good to be merry and wise;
'Tis good to be honest and true;
'Tis good to be off with the old love
Before one is on with the new!

Eh, mother?" and stooping she picks up Harcourt's poor crushed roses, and thrusting them into her bodice, hastily leaves the room.

An hour later, in the freshest of toilettes, her eyes bright and cloudless, and smiles on her scarlet lips, she sits by the duke's side, apparently as brilliant and happy as if no such person as Alan Harcourt had ever touched her heart and then left her for the sake of another woman.

PART II.

HARCOURT'S HOME-COMING.

PHYLLIS MONTRESSOR, actress, is a little blonde, with a pair of serious blue eyes and a shower of bright hair. She is the daughter of one Henry Montessor, born gentleman, but actor by profession, and a determination to go on the stage has grown up with her in spite of her guardian's prejudices.

She is as good as gold, though her pretty face brings her temptations, and she is full of love and gratitude to her two protectors, Harcourt and his mother.

She is home for a little holiday at the Hertfordshire house where Mrs. Harcourt resides, and on this particular evening she hovers about with a basket of flowers, filling each vase or glass she comes across, and looking like the Queen of Flowers herself with her ripe red lips and rich glowing cheeks.

And Mrs. Harcourt, lying back in her armchair, watches her with a smile.

"One would think some grand gala event was in prospect by the pains you are taking to adorn the room, child!"

"And is not Alan's coming always a grand gala event both to you and me?" Phyllis asks. "He has not been here for ages; couldn't get leave, he always says. I am dying to see him again and to know whether he has been enjoying himself—but *of course* he has."

A shadow passes over Mrs. Harcourt's brow. Adoring her only son, and trembling lest anything should happen to disturb the even current of his life, she is given to fancying trials and troubles for him which are often but the offsprings of a too anxious imagination. In the great event of his life, marriage, she has been woefully disappointed. In spite of Cecil Clifton's beauty and heiress-ship, Harcourt's mother, her wits sharpened by infinite love, detects faults in her future daughter-in-law that portend anything but a cloudless life for him. But the die is cast; Cecil is to be his wife, and Mrs. Harcourt thrusts aside regret and hopes for the best. She had always cherished an idea that Phyllis would be Alan's choice, and the news of his engagement to the other girl came like a thunderbolt.

"I trust Alan *has* enjoyed himself," she says after a pause; "but there is no certainty of happiness in this world."

And tears start in her eyes, while Phyllis's eyes grow misty by way of sympathy.

"Phyllis, do you like Cecil Clifton?" she asks suddenly.

Phyllis flushes scarlet, and lowers her lids a moment before she replies.

"Yes, I like her," she says hesitatingly; "that is, sometimes."

She is so strange, and appears now and then to hate the sight of me. Any way, she loves Alan devotedly, and if she had a million faults, I should forgive her all for the sake of that one virtue."

"Do you like Alan so much, then, that those who appreciate him find favour in your eyes?" Mrs. Harcourt questions, curious to discover the girl's real feelings.

"Like Alan! I love him with all my heart," Phyllis answers frankly; "and who could help loving him—the best, dearest, kindest fellow that ever lived. I don't believe there is a man living to compare with him, *except one, perhaps*," she murmurs *sotto voce*, with a blush, but the reservation does not reach her companion's ears.

"Here's Alan!" she cries, rushing out to meet him, but he does not take much notice of her beyond a pat on the head such as he would give a child. He walks very slowly, and his face looks terribly white and wan, though he forces a smile as he stoops and kisses his mother.

"Why, Alan, what's the matter?" Phyllis asks in dismay, and, attracted by her words, Mrs. Harcourt glances up at him hastily. The two pairs of eyes, though they are loving ones, are an ordeal he cannot stand just now, and to turn the subject he divests his pocket of two small cases. One of these he gives Phyllis. It contains a locket in the form of two hearts united by a lovers' knot and surmounted by the letters "E. F." The girl examines her gift with delight, and hands it over for Mrs. Harcourt's inspection.

"What is the meaning of 'E. F.'?" she asks.

Harcourt and Phyllis exchange glances, and into his face, in spite of his trouble, a gleam of mischief comes as he answers laughingly:

"Why, 'Ever Faithful,' of course! Phyllis is a good, true-hearted little thing, and I think the words very applicable."

Mrs. Harcourt agrees to this, but it seems to her quite a mockery to offer to one who is the victim of unrequited love such a trinket. Does Alan know how Phyllis loves him, she wonders.

"And I have something for you, mother, which I *know* you'll prize," and Harcourt drops into her lap a beautifully-painted miniature of himself.

He had taken it off Cecil's desk as he left, thinking she would not care for it when she could cast him off like this.

Mrs. Harcourt stares at the portrait aghast and then at the original.

"Alan! what on earth is the meaning of this? This picture belongs to Cecil," she exclaims anxiously.

"It means——" but Harcourt breaks down completely, and his mother sees him bow his head on the table, and fancies, horror-struck, that a sound resembling a sob bursts from his breast.

"It means that Cecil and I have parted, mother, parted for ever, and I feel as if I shall never look up again! It seems as if the

world had grown suddenly dark, and that life has no more hope or light for me. But don't you blame *her*. It is all my fault. I cannot make her so happy as she deserves to be, so it was better to say good-bye."

And this is the man, broken in spirit, weary of living, of whom Lady Estcourt had spoken so harshly, of whom even the woman he loved had been sceptical.

"I think I'll go and have a turn in the garden," he says quietly, and, too miserable, his mother lets him go without a word.

"Phyllis! *you* can console Alan for Cecil's love," she says abruptly.

"I?"

"Yes, by making Alan love you—by becoming his wife!"

Phyllis turns white, and feels like a culprit, but she is a frank, honest girl, and speaks out the truth always.

"Much as I love Alan, I could never be his wife!" she says in a very low voice, with quivering lips.

"And why not?" Mrs. Harcourt questions sharply. "Like the rest of the world, I suppose, you are apparently sincere, in reality deceitful. May I be permitted to know why it is impossible for you to become my son's wife?"

"Because I love another—I love Everard Forrester," she answers shyly.

"And does Alan know this?"

Phyllis bows her head in assent.

"I see it all. You and Alan have been in league against me. Those letters on that locket stand for 'Everard Forrester,' and not for 'Ever Faithful!'"

"They stand for both, *madre mia*! Everard and I have been engaged for months, but we have been obliged to keep it secret because his father has sworn to disinherit him if he marries an actress, so we live in hope that he may change some day and let us be happy. Alan has known all about it, but he thought a secret engagement would worry you. You will never speak to me unkindly again, will you? It will break my heart if you do!"

So Mrs. Harcourt kisses her, while the utter vanity of human desires passes through her mind as she does so. Alan is a free man; his engagement to Cecil Clifton is at an end, a desideratum which she has long had at heart, and Phyllis, the prize she has always had in view for her son's grasp, is out of her reach.

Phyllis feels a tear fall on her face with the caress she receives.

"Don't grieve so. Alan will be happy yet," she says soothingly. "I feel sure Miss Clifton will never rest till she has him back."

"If so, God grant it may be for his happiness. So good a son deserves a good wife, but to my thinking Cecil will give no more thought to a discarded lover than she does to a worn-out glove." And Harcourt, as he slowly paces up and down the garden walk, endorses his mother's opinion.

It is about five days after this that he enters the breakfast-room with an open letter in his hand, and his face whiter and more weary-looking than ever.

"Phyllis," he says, "here is news for you. Everard's father died yesterday suddenly, and Everard, master of his actions at last, comes here as soon after the funeral as he can. Let me be the first to congratulate you, my child. And, Phyllis, you can congratulate me in return. Cecil has forgotten me already; she is going to be married to the Duke of Sandilands!"

PART III.

"ALAN! I COME!"

EVERARD FORRESTER proves no laggard in love, and before the autumnal leaves have been swept away by winter's blast, he has made Phyllis his wife, and by the end of the year she is back again from her honeymoon cheering up Mrs. Harcourt like a sunbeam before she goes away to her new home.

To Harcourt all seasons seem alike and, as the time goes on, he gets more leave from his regiment, and throws himself into the excitement of field sports in order to thrust memory away. Meanwhile, Cecil passes sleepless nights and feverish days brooding over the coming marriage—or death, as she inwardly calls it.

Strawberry leaves are a crown of thorns to her thinking now. Harcourt is in her heart and in her head, and the more she essays to drive him out the more his image seems to cling to her. The news of Phyllis Montessor's marriage awakened her to the folly of her jealousy. And hopeless—wretched now that things have gone so far—she lets herself be entirely in her mother's hands. It is at Lady Estcourt's desire that she consents to visit one of the country places which is to be her own, but when Lady Estcourt arranged that they should go and stay at Ravenshill, she did not know that it was within a few miles of Holmwood, where Mrs. Harcourt lives.

Ravenshill is a charming place, with Italian gardens and a house replete with luxury, but, like its owner, it bears rather an old-fashioned aspect. The duke is given to a little pomposity and prosiness, but in spite of it he is very popular with the fair sex. Even Cecil, though she detests him as a lover, would like and respect him as a friend. His little weaknesses are by her exaggerated into grave faults, and she shrinks from him with a repugnance which is sometimes palpable. But Sandilands, frank and straightforward himself, never dreams that the woman who has accepted him without any apparent coercion can have done so from any feeling but liking, especially as being rich she has no occasion to sell herself.

It is not a pleasant sight to witness Sandilands and his *fiancée*

pacing side by side at Ravenshill. They are as ill mated as May and December. He, with his tall gaunt figure, with the frost of age crowning his brow, and she, slender and stately, with tresses that flash beneath the sunlight.

Yet, strange to say, Sandilands is the pleasantest sight of the two, for though his gait is slouching and his features bear the marks of time, there is a certain serenity in his eyes and a genial smile on his mouth.

Cecil's haughty beauty is in as great perfection as ever, save that she is white, as white as the snowdrops that are just rearing their heads. Her lips wear a perpetual curve that savours of bitterness of spirit and her voice has grown less musical. She submits to the duke's caress although she never returns it, and when an involuntary shudder passes over her at his slightest touch, woman's art invents an excuse at once.

"We must be having some people to dinner soon," the duke says; "there's a man here I want to ask, my nearest neighbour—a capital fellow, and the best hand I know at taking a fence. Harcourt's his name. He's in the Guards, but I don't remember meeting him at your house."

"We know Colonel Harcourt slightly," Lady Estcourt breaks in promptly; "but let Ravenshill begin its hospitality after Cecil's marriage, I beg of you. At present my own health requires quietude, and I shall be grateful for it."

The duke consents of course, while he wonders to what degree of robustness his future mother-in-law aspires, since with such blooming cheeks and so portly a form she professes to be an invalid.

It wants but three days to the wedding, and Cecil counts each moment with a desperate feeling at her heart. The sun has gone down, and the chill air stirs the leaves, but glad to leave the house that always seems to her like a prison, she strolls slowly in the grounds.

As the shadows slant down, Lady Estcourt grows anxious, for the duke has been out hunting all day and is delayed long beyond his usual hour of return. But fears are dispelled at last by his riding slowly up the drive. His features are so grave, however, that they elicit a remark from Lady Estcourt at once.

"Anything the matter?"

"Very much the matter," he says as he dismounts; "we had an excellent run, but the sport was spoiled by a fearful accident: a man, the best rider in the county, too, crushed under his horse. We picked him up and carried him home—poor fellow; he just breathed and that's all."

"Who is he?"

"Harcourt—you know—whom we——"

But he is interrupted by a shrill cry of anguish that seems to rend the air.

"Alan!" and Cecil falls senseless on the ground.

The wedding day arrives, but the bride-elect raves in paroxysm of brain fever, and the duke, as he listens to the name of "Alan," that the poor, pale lips keep repeating, feels his anger in having been duped melt in compassion for the sufferer.

And while Cecil hovers between life and death, Harcourt slowly recovers, and when he is sufficiently restored to health to be able to creep about the house, the duke visits him. Those who see him after this interview can hardly credit that he is the same man who rose that day, pale and white and spiritless; a bright light is in his eyes, a smile on his mouth and hope in his heart. He has heard that Cecil loves him, and that he or death will possess her, and he never doubts that she will live.

Confident that happiness has come to him at last, he goes to Ravenshill to claim his wife, but his heart sinks as he bends over her and sees not only a pallid face and wasted form, but eyes burning with a feverish light and parched lips dropping incoherent words.

"Cecil, beloved!" he cries, taking her into his arms. "See, I am here. No one can separate us now—my own—my wife."

"Wife."

This word strikes a chord in her brain. Shivering all over, she starts from his hold and clasping her thin hands together she fixes her gaze on his face.

"Wife? No, Sandilands, no. Not *your* wife. I cannot! I *dare* not be your wife, for I love Alan—Alan who is dead—*crushed*! But I shall see him again, not here, but *there*." And she points upwards, opening her eyes wide.

Harcourt looks round in despair. Is there nothing—*nothing* that can bring her back her wandering senses?

Suddenly he sees a vase of flowers on a table near, and seizing some red roses, he holds them before her eyes.

"Cecil, you promised to come to me when I sent you red roses. Keep your promise now. Come back to life and love and me, my darling, my life."

Her gaze grows rivetted on the flowers; slowly, slowly the light of reason steals into her eyes; a soft sweet smile breaks on her white lips. "Red roses," she whispers; "he has sent them to call me to him. Alan, I come!" she cries out joyfully, flinging her arms round his neck, and in that caress Cecil passes away.

DUCHESS FRANCES.

By SARAH TYTLER,

AUTHOR OF "CITOYENNE JACQUELINE," "SAINT MUNGO'S CITY," "LADY BELL," ETC.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE LAST OF DICK TALBOT—MARLBOROUGH'S AGENT—A
TARDY SUITOR.

THE depression which had fallen on Tyrconnel at the battle of the Boyne continued to weigh upon him, so that he and the French commander Lauzun declined to strike a blow for Limerick. They set sail for France, overtaking the duchess and Cherry shortly after their arrival at St. Germain, where James II. and Mary of Modena held their court in exile, still buoyed up by the vain hope of fresh and more successful attempts to regain—not a lost love, but three kingdoms. Louis had given the royal refugees a princely and cordial reception. So long as the noble castle on the hill, the old hunting seat of Francis I. and Henry IV. looking down on the smiling valley of the Seine and commanding the leafiest shades, the most gigantic and hoary trees France could boast, was but a temporary refuge, a resting place for the rallying of forces and maturing of schemes which must triumph in the end, St. Germain was no very dreary quarters. The little town at its base afforded accommodation for a small colony of English, Scotch and Irish in exile with their master, waiting still with ardour for the decisive hour when they should deal a new and irresistible blow, to redeem their eclipsed fortunes.

Within the next few months better news came from Ireland. The belied Irish infantry burning to redeem their lost credit had insisted on holding Limerick against King William, and had held it to such purpose that the enemy's guns having been surprised and blown up by the gallant Irish General Sarsfield, William raised the siege and left Limerick as Richard Hamilton had quitted Derry. On that the viceroy and commander of the forces was sent back to maintain the defence of Limerick in the face of his brother-in-law Marlborough, who having declined to go to Ireland and confront his old master while James was still there, returned from Germany and prepared to bring the war to a conclusion as soon as the late king had again retired to France.

Duke Dick accepted the commission reluctantly, while no one dreamt of doubting his personal courage. But he was prematurely old and shattered in constitution, lame with gout, and pursued by the black care that had lately taken possession of him. The honour of receiving the Order of the Garter James graciously bestowed on his substitute, did not serve to drive away Dick's ominous melancholy. In January, 1691, he took leave of France, in order to set out on his expedition.

Frances was full of the restless rivalry and incessant intrigue which occupied the courtiers round her, and had scarcely time to spare from the last scandal to bid him farewell.

"I am going, my lady," said Dick, stumbling heavily up to the *tabouret* on which she was sitting, determined not to abandon it for a moment, lest she should find it whisked away from her, on the pretence that it was wanted for one of the French princesses paying a complimentary visit to Queen Mary. If French duchesses claimed *tabourets* as their right, and could not be ousted from them, Irish duchesses were not to be defrauded of the honour due to their station.

"Going," she echoed, just granting him a moment's attention. "Then haste ye back with all Ireland at your back. Good-bye, Dick," she ended cheerfully, offering him, without rising, a red cheek bone and the tip of an ear.

"Had you nothing more to say to Hamilton when you sent him away to the wars?" growled Dick.

"I am sure I cannot remember," she answered carelessly; "what should I have had to say? I was younger then and he was young too and a very pretty fellow. You and I are no longer either young or pretty, my lord; and you would not have me make a scene and be the laughing-stocks of the court."

The next instant she was furiously resisting Lady Middleton, the chief lady of the bedchamber's remonstrances on the impossibility of a private lady, French or Irish, retaining a *tabouret* when there was nothing else left for a princess of the blood. It went without saying, since the *fauteuils* were kept for kings and queens or at the utmost stretch for dauphins and dauphinesses.

Tyrconnel stood a moment after Frances had literally forgotten his existence, and looked silently at the woman whom he had loved with such passionate constancy in the middle of his vices. Then he limped slowly and painfully away. Cherry, who was watching the leave-taking from a little distance, could not help feeling sorry for him.

Eight months afterwards the news reached St. Germain's that the Duke of Tyrconnel, after supping one night as usual with the commander of the garrison at Limerick, fell down in a fit of apoplexy, from which he never rallied, dying within a few hours. Whither had passed the rollicking roystering humours of his hot youth, the fierce bravado and savage hectoring of his declining

years? The world would sound as silent without him as was the grave he filled among the graves of more peaceable men in Limerick Cathedral. The tidings gave a shock to Frances, but she had grown well accustomed to shocks, and she quickly recovered from this one, under what was to her the stimulus of new misfortunes.

Following fast on Tyrconnel's death was the fulfilment of Marlborough's pledge to subdue the revolt in Ireland, including the last stand at Limerick; as a climax to these reverses, there figured in the proscription for the year the names of Richard Earl of Tyrconnel (his dukedom was of course unratified by William), Frances Countess of Tyrconnel and even that of the innocent child Lady Charlotte Talbot. For the second time Frances was ruined and her little daughter along with her. But there were reservations to the ruin; she had the sum of money belonging to her late husband which she had brought to France, and just as fifteen years before she had flung herself at King Louis' feet and craved worldly compensation for her irretrievable loss in the death of George Hamilton, so now she cast herself at King James's feet and in spite of the presence and vehement resistance of old rivals and implacable enemies, got a promise which was fulfilled eight years later of a grant of three thousand pounds from the pension settled by Louis on his brother king. This pension was not more than ten thousand pounds a year and there were many and heavy claims on it, so that Frances was both a good and a successful beggar; she had also, in her capacity of lady-in-waiting to Queen Mary, her place and maintenance at the exiled court so long as she chose to stay there; while little Charlotte Talbot was at liberty to grow up among the small crowd of Herberts, Drummonds, Erskines and Clares, who were transplanted with their parents to foreign soil. The palace corridors, in which so many fruitless dreams were woven, baseless plans concocted and weary sighs heaved, were made gay at times by the merry games and thoughtless laughter of children. The fact was that Frances Talbot, a second time a widow, her name proscribed, her late husband's estates confiscated, herself dependent more or less on royal charity, was still at forty-three an important personage. This circumstance, as well as the possession of the lively if somewhat tart temper which distinguished her to the last, may explain the assertion that she became a great favourite with the quick enough witted queen. True, Frances' irrepressible sallies may have been a welcome relief in the stifling atmosphere of false assumption, double dealing and wrangling which grew with the years in the banished court, but the author of the smart sallies, "*La Belle Jennings*" of former days, with her overbearing temper, turbulent spirit and reckless tongue, had little in common with the Queen, the proud, formal, decorous woman, devout to superstition.

There was a significant fault which was on occasions laid

ostentatiously to the Duchess of Tyrconnel's charge, and only pardoned because of the many sterling qualities that balanced it. She was a faithful servant, an entertaining companion, a good creature, in fact, in spite of her brusque manner and hot-headed ways, but "*she had a bad habit of scribbling news incessantly to her treacherous sister, Lady Marlborough.*" Now this was an extraordinary failing when one comes to consider there was so little love lost between the sisters that their known quarrels have been brought forward to prove that by whatever means Marlborough maintained his long course of underhand dealings with the court of St. Germain's, it was not by the instrumentality of his wife and her sister.

On the other hand, the characters of the two sisters must be taken into account, their unscrupulous, rampant worldliness, their capacity for daring enterprise, their devotion to what they regarded as their own and their children's interests, so that no private pique or family quarrel would be allowed to stand in the way, as it might have blinded and arrested weaker women.

Unquestionably Marlborough was not altogether in need of these female allies; he could have found other emissaries, among them the brave soldier the Duke of Berwick, James's illegitimate son, who was also Marlborough's nephew, being the son of his sister, Arabella Churchill. But Berwick was not always, or even frequently, available. He was often in the field fighting Louis' battles against King William and his generals, of whom Marlborough was the chief, while Lady Tyrconnel was at hand, without fail, settled at St. Germain's, able to plead a woman's irresponsibility, and the necessity of corresponding with her only surviving sister, in case of an exposure and of France's being taken to task.

Neither could James and his queen afford to neglect the slightest hold on the mighty commander, false as he was mighty.

There was a break and a difference in these interested illicit communications when in 1692 William detected the lurking treachery of Lord and Lady Marlborough, banished them both from court, and deprived them of various offices. But what did it matter, when Princess Anne, the next Protestant heir to the childless king and queen, quitted Whitehall on the disgrace of her friends and joined them at Sion House. She had sufficient interest, one-sided and stubborn as she was, to induce William to take back Marlborough into favour, lest worse should come of it, lest the distinguished silver-tongued soldier should at once repair to St. Germain's and lay his sword at the feet of his old master.

These must have been exciting moments to Frances, as well as to King James, while the issue hung in the balance. The rain of sisterly billets was not likely to be intermitted during the crisis.

In the early days at St. Germain's, before hope deferred had made the heart sick, while the air was still full of confident

expectancy, and nobody knew what might happen—an invasion of England or another revolution there any day, it was not noticed that one woman, among many, looked wistfully out on the sylvan prospect and furtively watched every coming guest or messenger, as she had ceased to watch the gate of the Paris *hôtel* twenty years before. She was doomed to disappointment for a time, and then lines began to appear on her modest, peaceful brow, and hollows in her cheeks, such as had been invisible till within the last twelve months. At last a letter arrived addressed to Mrs. Peter Thornhurst, telling her that the writer was in Paris, and requesting her permission for him to come out to St. Germain, on no political mission, but on his own private business. He informed her that he had been cruelly unfortunate since he saw her in being detained in Ireland and England, and prevented without any fault of his from executing his intention, that she wotted of. Before he could withdraw from King William's army he had been thrown from his horse and laid up for many weeks with a fractured thigh. No sooner was he about again and back in England putting his house in order before he started for foreign parts, than he was attacked by a tertiary ague and unable to move hand or foot for as many months as his thigh had confined him weeks, indeed, he had doubted whether he should rise from his bed again. As soon as he was able to crawl he had come over to Paris. As his health was still indifferent and he did not reckon his lengthened presence in the French capital an altogether desirable or safe proceeding, though he was provided with a passport and had the protection of his excellency the ambassador, he begged her to answer him without delay, and not keep him waiting unnecessarily. Of course this was if his coming was not in vain, and she agreed to his wishes, as he earnestly prayed and trusted she would, for sure they two had got enough of keeping apart and seeking to burst, leastway to ignore, their bonds.

When Cherry, with unconquerable shyness and emotion, which made huge inroads on the unvexed tranquillity of her mature years, and filled her with shame for feeling so young and looking so foolish, showed the letter to her grace the Duchess of Tyrconnel, who had heard of Peter Thornhurst's unexpected appearance on their last day in Dublin, Frances laughed as immoderately as her widow's weeds and the proprieties of a palace would permit. "I always knew how it would be, Cherry, that the beef-eater had only to turn up, however tardily, and you would give him a dispensation from all his offences and fall into his arms. It is the way with women like you. Oh, no, I will not keep you from his surliness any longer; only be so good as to consider what his sulks have cost you already. Nay, it is no use if you value his polished and animated society and the brilliant life of the wife of an English squire. That is more than even my rashness would have been equal to, though he had been polite and complacent like a French husband,

and could have introduced you to sister Sal's court set. I'll miss you monstrously, and so will Charley, but we are fairly established here, and must really begin to learn to manage for ourselves."

Peter Thornhurst made sharp work, in the end, of taking away Cherry, and during the brief interval there was a kind of armed truce between him and his cousin Tyrconnel, which proved more diverting to her than to him, by the manner in which she shrugged her shoulders and tittered perceptibly over his stiff entrances and exits, while he retaliated by glaring fiercely at her.

There was an English clergyman found in Paris who had preferred James's favour for the Roman Catholics to William's favour for the Presbyterians. He consented to obviate all future mistakes and disputes by re-tying the matrimonial knot, which as it seemed had been tied fast enough before, between Peter and Cherry.

It was marvellous how soon the couple fell into their natural relations, and how completely Frances's old programme was carried out in Cherry's life as the good, happy and popular mistress of Three Elms. There had been great consternation in the Kent mansion when it was known that the squire was bringing home a French madam, but three months had not passed when madam might have come from the centre of Africa or the slums of St. Giles without diminishing Peter's kindred and the people's hearty liking for her and unbounded faith in her, the first instalment of the love and devotion which waited on her thenceforth to old age.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ST. GERMAINS IN THE GATHERING SHADOWS—THE WHITE MILLINER.

HARDY endurance, with better days in view, and buoyant resolution to bring about the change, fled by degrees from St. Germain. How could it be otherwise when lethargy and narrow fanaticism had the aging ex-king in their grip, and were closing like the waters of Lethe over his doomed head?

Mary of Modena was yet a young woman, not over thirty, with a boy prince and his later-born sister to struggle and fight for, while their adherents, though for the time subdued and scattered, were still numerous, powerful and strongly attached to the exiled house. But she was a woman of greater domestic virtue than of queenly intellect or public spirit; she was in no sense a heroic woman, though she was a good wife and mother. She was dragged down by the sluggish nature lapsing into premature dotage to which she was bound. She could barely control the spiteful cabals and petty wearing strife of her courtiers. She believed in the profound homage and specious generosity and courtesy of Louis, and allowed him to flatter and distract her from striking while the iron was hot, in order to restore her son to

his inheritance; she was a coward where her boy was concerned, and would not willingly risk him to do his duty, as Jacobites regarded it, where his party was concerned, in inspiring his followers by his presence, and sharing their privations and perils; other women might, nay, were bound to venture their sons, but her prince must be spared. She is said to have been charitable to the limit of her means to that suffering colony around her at St. Germain, whose members had given up everything for her husband and son's dynasty, on whom the blight of enforced idleness and pinching poverty fell ere long, degrading and crushing many a gallant spirit. Need she be blamed because she and hers forgot in a measure that, while condemned to the mortification of being pensioners on a foreign king's bounty, they still dwelt in comparative ease and luxury, entertained by the magnificent galas and hunting parties of a royal entertainer, at which his royal guests had always places of honour, in which old *habitués* like Lady Tyrconnel had the satisfaction of renewing their acquaintance with many a noble ally of past days. Queen Mary's religion, to which the well-meaning, perplexed soul turned for comfort, waxed more and more into a mixture, which can very well exist, of dreamy mysticism and gross superstition.

The French king was lavish in personal favours and in vague promises, from which another man than James might have wrested something definite; but when it came to that James, who had not been deficient in energy in early life, was hardly ruffled in his equanimity when the fleet which he joined at La Hogue for the purpose of invading England never left the port. The fits of bleeding at the nose which had first shown themselves during his campaign in Ireland recurred again and again, and were accompanied by a comatose condition, from which he could only be roused by the most violent remedies. In fact, symptoms of apoplexy were conspicuous and undeniable. He ceased to derive even the heavy enjoyment he had at first taken in witnessing the magnitude of his royal brother Louis's establishments and resources. Upon the whole it was a relief to his party and gave a fresh impetus to his failing cause, when the melancholy infirm king died, meekly enough, in 1701, at St. Germain, where he had spent, for the most part, fourteen years of exile, fourteen years of hopes and fears, with the fears at last greatly predominating. For the young Prince of Wales, as he had been called, was a likely enough lad if somewhat dull and stupid, of whom nobody knew any harm to speak of, while Anne, who in the year of her father's death succeeded her brother-in-law, William, was also written childless; and the Electress Sophia, of Brunswick, with her heirs, was but a remote and obscure offshoot from what had once been the vigorous stock of the kings of England.

In 1701, three days after Anne's accession, Marlborough was appointed her commander-in-chief. In 1702 he was created

Marquis of Blandford and Duke of Marlborough, so that Sarah Jennings became the second duchess in the family, with a securer hold on the strawberry leaves of her coronet than Frances had ever possessed. But the same year the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough's only son, a promising lad of seventeen, fell a victim to the scourge of the generation, small-pox. Frances, who never bore a son, and, like Queen Elizabeth where her cousin, the Queen of Scots, was concerned, had grudged to her rival her fine boy, thought of her little brothers, Ralph and John, dead in their infancy, and of her sister Bab, with but one dead girl lying by her mother's side, and said bitterly that the Jennings were a barren race. For what were silly girls when stout sons were denied, or stricken down in childhood and youth?

Frances' daughters were not so silly or simple as to be incapable, when backed by their husbands, of standing up for themselves against their mother, who must have been no trifle for mortal man to contend with in the person of a mother-in-law. One of Frances' daughters, Fanny, Lady Dillon, bore her mother company in her exile at St. Germain. Lady Dillon in her mature bloom was reputed one of the beauties at the court of the banished king; but the man who praised her charms was the good-natured gallant poetaster, her uncle, Count Anthony Hamilton, to whom every lass was indeed a queen. From certain stray utterances of Lady Tyrconnel, at a later date, it is very doubtful whether the company of Lady Dillon at St. Germain was any comfort to her mother, whether the two were able to preserve even a fair show of amity. The quarrelsome blood of the Jennings required doting, submissive lovers and husbands, or generous, tender-hearted kinswomen like Cherry Thornhurst to bear the tyranny. It rendered Duchess Sarah's fiery feuds with her children, grandchildren and every man, woman and child who entered into near relations with her, and did not bow implicitly to her will, the by-word of her time. It prevented any chance of peace between Duchess Frances and her refractory descendants.

Marlborough's brilliant campaigns and "glorious victories" in the Low Countries lasted from 1704 to 1711, during which the battles of Blenheim, Ramillies, Oudenarde and Malplaquet were fought and won. He received from his dazzled and grateful sovereign and country the royal manors of Woodstock and Wootton in perpetuity, while his palace of Blenheim, over the erection of which his duchess and her architect, Sir John Vanburgh, contended so wrathfully, was built at the public expense.

It is easy to guess the mingled feelings with which Duchess Frances heard of these victories; how she must have felt a *souppçon* of awkwardness in her relationship—which she was still proudly proclaiming—to the illustrious conqueror when the enemy, whom he was always defeating with such signal *éclat*, was none other than her old patrons and present hosts—the French king and the

French nation. On the occasions of her appearance at the festivities of Versailles in the train of her queen, she could not, stout-hearted as she was, have been without certain qualms and troublesome *arrière-pensées* when she was greeted with punctilious but stony courtesy by the great Louis. Of course, she could not help having a gallant brother-in-law, the first captain of his age, in the service of Queen Anne; but the recollection was trying at times. The trial was greatly outshone, however, by the satisfaction to be drawn from the additional importance lent to her and her clandestine transactions with the splendid traitor Marlborough, by his triumphs as a general and the trumpet blasts of fame which proclaimed his achievements and honours through the length and breadth of Europe. What a feather in her cap was his glory, and the use she made of it in her daily, hourly struggles with her old enemies the Dukes of Melfort and Perth (dukedom was plentiful at St. Germain) and with new rivals! The court, whose idle pretensions had become a shadow and a mockery, was honeycombed with crafty manœuvres and rent asunder by internal warfare. Whatever the pretensions and the manœuvres might seem to the Italian-born queen, the chronic warfare was the bane of her widowed, impoverished life, from which she was fain to seek refuge in the religious rites and austerities of the neighbouring convent of Chaillot. There, friendly nuns had received as a sacred deposit the urn containing the heavy heart of poor King James, just as they had welcomed all that was left of the restless heart of his mother, Henrietta Maria. Unfortunate mother and ill-fated son!

But clamorous self-assertion and eager, exultant interest in getting the better of her foes, constituted the very element in which Frances was most at home. What did she care for the haggard men, poverty-stricken women and ill-cared-for children lounging and dawdling listlessly, or creeping out of sight in the streets of the little foreign town? Let them pine for the grey hills where they had lorded it in all the feudal dignity and independence of Highland chieftains, or for the blue Irish lakes and dim green and purple bogs where an adoring peasantry kissed the feet of their masters; or for the peace and comfort of their forsaken English homes. If these unlucky people could do no better for themselves than go to the wall when their rightful king was under a cloud, it was none of her business. Other people had suffered greater reverses and known how to rise above them.

Frances, in her middle age, liked nothing better than the cunning stratagems and wily machinations, the mysteries, nicknames and ciphers in which she bore a part. His grace of Marlborough figured in the conspirators' elaborately composed letters under various disguises—"Mr. Armsworth" among others. The queen was sometimes "Lady Betty," sometimes "Mrs. Kelly." The young king was now "the captain," now "the silk merchant,"

now "Grant," or "Thompson," or any other common name which took the fancy of the writers. Such tricks were as marrow to Frances's bones. It is easy to see in imagination that stately terrace of St. Germain's haunted by a little woman, no longer young, no longer beautiful, but with an air of indescribable distinction and inexhaustible energy. She is oblivious of the sylvan charm of the woods, the valley, the winding river, and only intent on securing a confabulation with some man of note among the exiles, such as the Duke of Powys, or Lord Middleton, or on being the first to hail the arrival of a messenger with the delightful enigma of a reply to one of those letters, as elaborately deep and transparently shallow as the missive which had called it forth.

Neither in youth, nor in advancing age, had Frances any taste for the mild distractions and gentle diversions which occupied the more easily diverted and simple-hearted among the exiles, when a gleam of life and hope came back to them in the course of years, in the persons of the princely young pair, the Chevalier de St. George, or James the Third of England and Eighth of Scotland, and his fair, bright sister, who shed a fleeting lustre on the darkening scene. Lady Tyrconnel had lost patience with pretty play, and she had always despised the rural delights which had long chained Count Anthony Hamilton to St. Germain's. She had an equal contempt for his idle literary philandering with Mrs. Henrietta Bulkeley, the young Duchess of Berwick's sister, and the niece of Frances's old acquaintance Frances Stewart, Duchess of Richmond, because nothing more substantial could come of it than tender looks, sentimental sighs and the conning together of silly court lyrics and the more pretentious but equally worthless poem called "*La Fleur d'Epine*," on which, to please Mrs. Henrietta, Anthony wasted so much time that might have been better employed.

It was many a long year since "*La Belle Jennings*" had been guilty of paraphrasing an epistle of Ovid's, and had laughed loudly with her neighbours at the licentious doggerel satires of my Lord Rochester; and Count Anthony, with his elderly gallantry and many accomplishments, was as poor as a church mouse, while Mrs. Henrietta Bulkeley was no richer.

It did not seem to reconcile Frances to such foolish trifles that her former sister and ally, Countess Philibert de Gramont, by this time a wealthy widow, had taken to aiding and abetting so far Anthony in his silliness. She established herself in summer in her country house of Pontolier on the Seine. She provided *fêtes champêtres* for the young scions of the house of Stewart and their court, and entered into their sports with something of the old sparkling Irish gaiety of Elizabeth Hamilton. But frolicsome pilgrimages to shrines and hermitages, merry meals on the green-sward, strawberry or filbert hunting were not at all in Frances

Talbot's way after she was up in years, even though she had still a young daughter to enjoy them. Scarcely less against the grain were the commissions which the pious queen gave her to superintend the decoration of the shrine in the convent of Chaillot, where James's heart was deposited, and where it was already believed to work miracles in answer to the prayers of the faithful votaries admitted to worship before it.

Lady Tyrconnel's treasonable traffic with Marlborough was not confined to letters. She readily got leave of absence from her court duties, and under the plea of travelling and drinking such mineral waters as those of Aix-la-Chapelle for the benefit of her health, she visited Germany, Flanders and Holland, and had opportunities for personal interviews with her brother-in-law, when her wanderings led her near his camp for the time. In reference to one of these meetings the Duke of Marlborough wrote to his duchess that he had waited on her sister and found her looking old, with her hoarseness worse than when he had seen her last, while she was reasonable and kind. Other people who knew her then, described her in still less flattering terms, as very small, very lean, without a trace of her former beauty.

Either during her travels, or while resident at St. Germain's, Duchess Frances arranged and concluded the marriage of her daughter, Lady Charlotte Talbot, with Prince Ventimiglia, a Provençal nobleman of Sicilian extraction.

In 1700, in addition to the remnant of the late Irish Viceroy's fortune, which she had brought with her to France, and the three thousand pounds which she had induced King James to award her out of his pension, she succeeded in recovering a portion of her jointure from what had been Lord Tyrconnel's lands of Cabrale in Ireland. From this time she was always complaining vehemently of the non-payment of her rents; and in 1707 or 8, when she was sixty years of age, she ventured back to Ireland on the matter. She is said to have gone by Brussels and Holland direct to Ireland, avoiding England on her way. But on her return journey she is believed to have been in London. It was on this occasion that a remarkable incident in her eventful history is said to have happened.

Madam Thornhurst had come up from Three Elms with her squire for a month's sojourn in town, that the worthy couple might learn what was doing and be able to keep pace with the times. It happened one day that Cherry, in her sedan chair, was passing the New Exchange, when the bright idea struck her that she might alight and visit one of the milliners' stalls in the great mart, so as to have it in her power to carry down into Kent for the benefit of the squire's sisters and nieces the latest fashion in hoods and *négligées*. She had no sooner entered the colonnade when she observed more than one group of buyers and sellers watching a singular figure among the regular traders. This was a little woman

in a white gown and cape, wearing a mask, standing behind a stall and busily offering laces and gloves to the comers and goers.

"Who or what is she?" the country madam inquired with interest of one of the bystanders. "It is an odd guise or disguise for a milliner. Doth she bide here of a constancy? Is she a little mad, think you?"

"Bless you, madam," answered the person addressed, "it do be 'the white widow' or 'the white milliner,' she is called sometimes one, sometimes t'other, and there is a rare pother made about her. No, for sure, she is none of the regular saleswomen, she hath only turned up in that corner for the last three days. Folk say she is bound to be one of the poor Jacobite ladies come up to Lon'on with a petition and fain to keep herself and her young family from starving by selling some fal-lals in this sort, till she can get speech of the Queen or her grace of Marlborough, which comes much to the same thing."

Even while the man spoke some gesture of "the white milliner," some tone of her roughened voice, as she called out briskly and boldly, "Who wants cheap laces fresh from France and Flanders, lawfully come by? None of your smuggled goods here. Come and buy," sent an electric thrill through the chance listener. She saw as in a mirror a young queen of beauty, and of not too fastidious frolic, made up as an orange girl, offering oranges at the door of the Duke's Theatre; the same girl, a little more sedate in a cloak and mask, at the water-gate of Whitehall pretending to hide behind a jutting-out corner of the masonry till the young crew of a wherry lifted a bottle of plague-water from the stairs; still the same girl, woman-grown, removing her mask in Spring Gardens to confront and defy an indignant, outraged man.

While the old well-remembered pictures flashed again before her mind's eye, Cherry herself presented a pleasant picture in her "outing" gown of lavender brocade, with a spotlessly white lawn neckerchief crossed over her motherly bosom, and a grey beaver hat above the frilled cap shading her kind and still comely face. Although she carried a gold-headed stick to support her steps, like most ladies of her years and degree, she advanced nimbly to the stall in the corner. Instinctively she, the most candid of souls, adopted the ruse Lady Tyrconnel had thought fit to employ, for Cherry did not know what danger to the player might not lurk in the exposure of her game.

Madam Thornhurst bent low over the contents of the stall as if to examine the packets of lace and gloves, at the same time she glanced up furtively in the masqued woman's face and addressed to her a whispered appeal. "Cousin Frances, Lady Tyrconnel, what are you doing here? Is it safe, is it fit—oh, pardon me if I appear to blame you—that you should be thus engaged? I am so glad that we are up in town, and that I came by the Exchange this

morning. Will your Grace not let us help and befriend you in some worthier, more becoming manner?"

"Cherry Thornton, by all that's alive," answered her grace in the same subdued voice. "This is a meeting!" Then she spoke aloud, "No, madam, you cannot have the Mechlin on lower terms, but if you will step with me to the back of the stall I think I have some oddments of Valenciennes that may suit you."

Out of sight and hearing of the audience to the encounter, Frances showed herself well pleased and just the least little bit ashamed of being once more caught masquerading, and that in her age.

"I, too, am right down happy that your luck and mine hath brought you to town in this month of May, Cousin Cherry, and I am beholden to you for your proposal of backing me—there spoke the old Cherry, though I misdoubt me that your good man, Peter Thornhurst, would hardly indorse the obliging offer. He and I have not sailed in the same boat this many a day. Don't interrupt me, child; fortunately there is no great need to back me. It is only that I was detained for a couple of weeks in this London, which is more changed than by the great fire we wot of, so changed that I scarce know a public place or a creature. Of the creatures I did know who are left, nineteen out of twenty would not acknowledge my claim to their acquaintance supposing I jogged their memory. And here was I with a piece of business which these rogues of lawyers would not get through in a trice, as they might have done. I was spending money, while my rascals of tenants in Ireland are always behindhand with their rents. Methought, Cherry, I should clear my expenses, and it would serve to pass the time, if I borrowed, for the nonce, a plan some of the poor Scotch and Irish ladies have brought into vogue, since we were all ruined at the Boyne. But my plaguy business is finished and I am about to start for France. This is positively my last day on 'Change," explained Frances with a lingering twinkle in her eyes, "only I am going down to Holywell for a couple of days. I have an invitation from my worshipful brother-in-law, as if I should have needed an invitation to that quarter! He ain't at home, he's at the wars as usual, as you will see if you read the news-prints. My old mother and my high and mighty sister Sarah, who is mistress of the fine new house I am going down to Hertfordshire to see, are both from home likewise, which, taking all things into consideration, may make the visit peacefuller and pleasanter. But I'll tell you what, Cherry, I should be all the better for your company, if you'll give it me—you and I never disagreed, and I've a notion I'll be so lonesome all by myself, that I'll see ghosts at every step, though, as I told you, they've pulled down the old Holywell, my father's cramped, crammed house among the farm-offices and the gooseberry bushes, and built a grand mansion. What my lord and my lady, who have court quarters and their

own palace at Blenheim, want with another mansion it beats me to guess. Yes, come with me, Cherry. Tell Cousin Peter I'll get you into no scrape. I'll not undermine your principles, political or moral. I'll just keep you a couple of days with me—he need not grudge me that much of your company when all my children, even little Charley, are gone from me. Children, quoth I? Two of them, my Lady Dillon and my Lady Kingsland, are no children of mine, they are no better than adders I had the misfortune to foster in my bosom. But we'll say no more about them, it only angers me; any way I'll send you back to your good man safe and sound."

Not Cherry, not even Peter Thornhurst, though he grumbled loudly at the imposition, could refuse the request, so Cherry went down once more to Holywell with her Cousin Frances instead of her Aunt Hill on this occasion.

It was the first time Frances had revisited the place where she was born since she had quitted it, a light-hearted, ambitious girl, proud to start in the world as one of the maids-of-honour to the Duchess of York. It was not as the "white widow" or the "white milliner" that Frances reappeared in Hertfordshire. She presented herself with all the state and dignity of her Grace of Tyroconnel, who, although she had secured but a fraction of the immense wealth of her Grace of Marlborough, was still, in spite of misadventures, in possession of considerable funds, which she husbanded warily and spent discreetly.

The orders for his sister-in-law's honourable reception, forwarded by the Duke of Marlborough, caused Frances and Cherry to be received with every mark of respect by his Grace's servants in the new, spacious and costly house, at which one of the visitors was for ever sneering.

Frances was a little more subdued when she stood in the grand old abbey by her sister Bab's grave, and read the long inscription recording the domestic virtues of her who lay beneath, which Colonel Griffith, her husband, had caused to be engraven on the stone.

"Poor, docile, dutiful Bab! Nobody will ever write as much of me. Nobody will call me a pattern of wifely obedience and good housewifery," muttered Frances a little ruefully. "And yet do you know, Cherry," she added, recovering her spirit in a moment, "I had two men, neither of whom would ever have dreamt of saying me nay. I am not sure whether you can vouch as much for your one man."

Cherry shook her head, but she smiled a smile of perfect faith and content. She thought if she died, her Peter, though he was never anything else than lord and master in his own house of Three Elms, and said her nay half-a-dozen times in the day when he was in the humour—generally repenting the contradiction five minutes afterwards, would have just such a chronicle made of her

merits—vastly exaggerating them in his reverent love and sorrow. She could imagine him taking their son—they had one boy—on a quiet Sunday afternoon, to stand before the tablet on the church wall, or at the head of the mossy mound in the churchyard, and telling him what a good woman his mother had been, and how he, her husband, though he was bound to get along somehow, had yet been lost without her, since God had taken her from him, ending always with the emphatic injunction: “Lad, an’ you mind me and my words, and are worth aught—as you should be, seeing that you are her son as well as mine—never forget your mother.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE END OF ALL.

CHANGES still followed changes in Frances’s declining years; many of them buffets of fortune affecting her more or less to the last. In 1710 occurred the great quarrel between Queen Anne and sister Sarah, which no efforts, however importunate on the offender’s part, ever patched up. A new force was at work; a new power in the ascendancy. Cousin Abigail Hill, who had owed her early promotion to the imperious duchess, had slyly ousted her patroness, and first as Mrs., and then as Lady Masham, the wife of one of the royal pages, with Harley, Bolingbroke and all the Tories at her back, was now ruling her plastic yet *dour* mistress, and practically reigning at Kensington and St. James’s, in the room of “Mrs. Freeman” superseded.

Frances might have rejoiced in the ascendancy of the Tories, but with the eclipse of sister Sarah and her great captain, the principal source of Lady Tyrconnel’s influence at the exiled court and of the favours she received from the queen “over the water,” came to an end. In 1712, the Duke of Marlborough, who had assumed much of the state of royalty, eating his meals alone, while the gentlemen of his staff stood behind his chair, was dismissed from his office and impeached in Parliament for needlessly prolonging the war in Germany and the Low Countries to serve his own purposes and for trafficking in the sale of army commissions in order to increase his enormous wealth. But, disgraced as he was, the damning evidence of his treasonable correspondence with the court of St. Germain, which would have cost him his head, and might have compromised Lady Tyrconnel among others, was withheld and suffered to fall to the ground.

The same year the poor, blooming, gay Princess Louisa, born and bred in the shade of exile, fell a victim to small-pox, which had been frequently fatal to members of her race, from which her brother, the Chevalier de St. George, narrowly escaped with his life. Shortly afterwards the Chevalier was politely requested, as one

of the chief bones of contention between the two countries of England and France, to retire to one of the boundaries of the latter kingdom. France was absolutely drained and exhausted by the long wars, while all the glorious feats of Turenne and Condé, the generals of Louis's youth, were likely to be forgotten under the humiliation inflicted on the Gallic nation by the magnificent generalship of the faithless Marlborough. Even the vain and selfish old king, who had shed so much blood for the exaltation of himself and France, with his wrinkles unsoftened by the black perriwig which concealed his grey hair, was fain to cry, "Hold, enough!" and to think on terms of truce with Europe. Accordingly one of the conditions of the Peace of Utrecht, in 1714, was the formal abandonment on Louis's part of the support which he had hitherto lent to the son of his old friend and ally, James II., and Louis's acknowledgment of the Elector of Hanover, who, on the death of the reigning sovereign, was immediately received and accepted by the bulk of the English people, as George I., the lawful successor to Queen Anne.

That reluctant declaration of King Louis was the death-blow to the Jacobite cause, and "the Rebellion of the Fifteen," which followed in Scotland and England the year after, was but a desperate effort, fore-doomed.

The shadows were indeed closing in thick and fast, till they approached the darkness of night, round the hapless colony at St. Germain's, of which heart-broken Mary of Modena, struggling under the pangs of a mortal disease, was still permitted to be the centre.

Duchess Frances was never the woman to stick to a perishing cause or to abide with a handful of faithful, if squabbling, old servants by their dying mistress, who had been destined to live thirty years—half of her life—in exile. It could scarcely be said to hurry Lady Tyrconnel's parting footsteps, though it made two weakened ties the less to St. Germain's, that both the Hamiltons were gone before her. Elizabeth, Comtesse de Gramont, was dead and her attached brother, Count Anthony, old and poor, had withdrawn from his chosen refuge, the scene of his literary flights and mild flirtation with Mrs. Henrietta Bulkeley. He had settled at Poussé, to be under the wing of his niece, the abbess there. He was still equal to an inspiriting consolation granted to him. Through a second niece, Lady Stafford, who was another daughter of the late Comtesse de Gramont, he was enabled to maintain an interesting correspondence with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Frances withdrew from all that remained of the banished court. She quitted the country of her adoption, in which she had dwelt for so many years; she came back to the native country of both her husbands—Ireland of all places—and established herself in Dublin, where she had reigned as the wife of the Lord-Deputy. If a few of her old friends and satellites survived to welcome her; if Ire-

land was still Jacobite and Roman Catholic at heart, the Jacobites and Roman Catholics were no longer the dominant party. But the fearlessness which brought Frances back to the country in which her name had been proscribed, was not without its warrant. She was secure in the amnesty which the wise clemency of the heavy German Georges and their shrewd ministers granted to the earlier offenders in the Stuart cause, and the oblivion into which their offences were suffered speedily to fall.

To do Lady Tyrconnel justice, she does not seem to have provoked hostility in her age. She accepted her position on sufferance, and settled herself quietly on the sufficient means she could command for a private gentlewoman's establishment, in her own house in Paradise Row, on Arbour Hill, near the Phoenix Park; she does not even seem to have had the least share, under the rose, in those practical insults to the statue of King William on College Green which, during whole decades, afforded a safety valve for the stored wrath of the native Irish against their Orange step-brethren.

Duchess Sarah, out of her huge abundance, was ransacking Belgium for pictures by her favourite painter Rubens, with which to decorate the walls of her palace of Blenheim, where the great duke was ending his days in senile imbecility. She was declining to die when her doctor told her, and storming like the untamed virago she was over all who had the misfortune to be connected with her, or to come near her. Duchess Frances, out of her comparative poverty, was founding a convent of Poor Clares in Dublin, and including in her will, under the plea of tendering them her forgiveness, a lively vituperation of the two daughters who had offended her, and a special bequest of her house and furniture to pay some veritable debts of honour of Dick Talbot's, which had never been discharged and lay heavily on his aged widow's conscience.

Cherry, an aged woman in her turn, was still living with her old squire at Three Elms. He was Sir Peter now, for he had been high sheriff of his county, when he was knighted, and later on he had received a baronetcy as a sturdy pillar of the Whig and Protestant succession. Lady Thornhurst had not forgotten the cousin Frances of her youth, and having had some reason to fear that she might be desolate and neglected in her great age and reverses, her kinswoman made a special request to her husband to allow the young squire, a fine honest fellow who had just completed his education by making the grand tour, to finish the tour by going on an expedition to Ireland. Dublin was now about as accessible by Holyhead as any other part of his Majesty's dominions, and Cherry's son would do what he could to comfort and cheer his mother's old friend.

Sir Peter protested a good deal to begin with at what he considered a waste of means and a waste of time, an uncalled for demonstration altogether, but he gave his consent at last. He

even added to it the amendment that he, too, owed something to his cousin Hamilton of former days, for if she had ever wronged him, it was also true that he was indebted to her for what had been the greatest blessing of his life. At these words, spoken half-gruffly, half-bashfully, a pair of sweet dim old eyes had sparkled for a moment as when in their first youth, and a thin ivory hand had caught up the squire's wrinkled brown hand, and with a pretty half-French gesture, kissed it before he could indignantly prevent the action.

The young squire, nothing loth to prolong his adventures, while he was manly enough and kind-hearted enough to be tender to a woman, whether she were young or old, was on his way to comfort and gladden his mother's friend. In the convent of Poor Clares meek and devoted nuns were praying day and night for their benefactress, when the end came suddenly.

On a bitter winter's night, in 1730, an old woman of eighty-one fell from her bed to the floor of her room, and being too feeble to raise herself or to call for help, was found in the morning perishing with cold, and fast dying. It was a piteous close to a life which had begun with joyous ardour and risen to heights of gratified ambition.

Yet Frances Talbot was not entirely forsaken. The Poor Clares were crying out for the forgiveness of her sins, and calling down blessings on her hoary head. Away in England her old friend Cherry was thinking lovingly of her. Cherry's husband had cancelled his debt against her and was not only wishing her well, he was thanking her for the peaceful fruit of her rashness and folly. If Frances had but known it, Cherry's son was travelling post-haste to look after her and solace her, though he arrived only in time to stand sorrowfully by her open grave.

Frances, Duchess of Tyrconnel, was buried in St. Patrick's Cathedral, where no stone was raised in her honour, but a tablet to her memory was inserted in the wall of the Scottish College, Paris, and an ever-burning lamp was kept before it for fully a hundred years, when the college itself ceased to exist. Duchess Frances survived her first husband, Count George Hamilton, fifty-four years; her second husband, Dick Talbot, thirty-nine years; her eldest daughter, Lady Ross, with whom she seems to have been on friendly terms, six years, and her brother-in-law, the Duke of Marlborough, eight years. Duchess Sarah, on the contrary, survived her sister Frances fourteen years, remaining unsubdued to the last, and dying as late as 1744.

THE END.

THE TOP OF HER BENT.

By FAYR MADOC,

AUTHOR OF "THEREBY," "MARGARET JERMINÉ," ETC.

ONCE upon a time there was a Princess who believed so ardently in the supernatural, that at last she thought and talked of nothing else, and occupied herself solely in discussing dreams and spiritual manifestations, and she surrounded herself with people only who had seen visions and whose strange dreams had (or had not) come true, and who had received spiritual manifestations and seen apparitions—or at least whose second cousins and great aunts had witnessed the extraordinary.

Now the Princess dwelt in a palace which had once been a place of luxury and delight, where people could move about fearlessly during all the twenty-four hours of every day and night. But now that this Princess reigned in it, it was haunted by spirits, and, go where one might, some intangible presence or some eerie appearance filled every nook and corner of it. One day the Lord Chamberlain met a Shadowy Lady in Blue on the staircase, who seemed to gaze at him out of eyeless sockets. The Lord Chamberlain did not fail to relate his adventure, and the next day the first Maid of Honour encountered the same lady in the picture-gallery. Then she was seen by the Chief Page; then by the Mistress of the Robes. Soon she had been seen by the whole household, including the Princess herself, and thenceforth the Eyeless Blue Lady became a denizen of the palace and walked there as freely as its royal mistress. Next, a phantom coach was heard at midnight to drive up to the palace portals and a phantom hand rang furiously at the great bell. No eye saw this vision. The curiosity of those who peeped remained ungratified. But the sounds were heard by many, and those who heard shuddered and clung to each other in dismay.

Soon, unusual things happened in the palace with regularity and frequency. Nightly, a cold and terrible hand was laid upon the cheek of the Lord Chief Justice after he had extinguished his light. Nightly also, a rustling silk gown passed through the chamber of the Generalissimo of the Army. On Sundays, at two in the early morning, a hysterical laugh was laughed at the bedside of the Princess herself, and at an hour before cock-crow every month when the moon began to wane, feet scuffled, a heavy body fell, and

a deep and dreadful groan was uttered in the apartment of the Poet Laureate. An intangible monk seemed to inhabit the library; an invisible but bloody presence was felt to pervade the ball-room. Men shunned the smoking-room at the going down of the sun, because at that hour the apartment was permeated by the faint and exquisite aroma of a tobacco no mortal had ever inhaled. The grand piano in the drawing-room was constantly played upon, and when the Princess and her suite entered in haste—although but that instant the room had been ringing with melody—the piano would be found closed and the apartment void. Children scampered up and down the wide staircases, when there were no children within a mile of the palace. Dogs whined at closed doors, and lo! when one arose to admit the creature, no dog was to be found. In short, there was no end to the extraordinary occurrences which took place in the Princess's palace daily. The Princess grew thin and haggard, and her large and luminous eyes looked as if they would fall out of her head. And her whole court grew meagre and pallid also, and none spoke above his breath, and the women clustered together in twos and threes, and when any one entered a room, the occupants would ask at once, "What have you seen? What have you experienced? What did you dream last night?"

Then some who had formerly held high offices at the court, but who had been displaced because they were incredulous of the Princess's second sight, and because they had declared that he only who desired to see ghosts saw them, for that ghosts *per se* existed not, drew together in consultation and agreed that something must be done.

"Let us prevail upon the Princess to marry. Marriage is a healthy state," said one.

This proposition was received with unanimity, and an audience of the Princess being obtained, two gentlemen, who had once been respectively Prime Minister and Chief Court Physician, were admitted into Her Royal Highness's august presence. They found their royal mistress—who was herself as slender as a lily and very wan—surrounded by her maids of honour, lean and terrified damsels, and by her ministers of state—cadaverous and melancholy personages. The whole assembly looked as if it were smitten by some painful nervous sickness; each one glanced hither and thither, as though devoured by some dread expectancy—all started at every sound, and their breasts heaved with inexplicable emotions and their bony hands were clenched convulsively.

For very pity the ex-Chief Physician could have wept. But he restrained himself, while the ex-Prime Minister explained his errand, begging respectfully to inform the Princess that, while she was striving to grasp the Supernatural, the Natural was falling into decay—that the Army and Navy were becoming disorganized,

foreign powers were growing aggressive, literature was neglected and art and science forgotten, social evils went unremedied, and the whole realm was becoming disaffected.

Then the Princess said, sighing, "What would you have me do?"

Then the ex-Prime Minister replied with caution, "Madam, we would have your Royal Highness bend your mind from the Immaterial to the Material. To one so widely read as your Royal Highness we need not to quote the wise man's words: *Our business is not to know all things, but those which concern our conduct.*"

"But how can we tell what truths may not be revealed to us through spiritual investigation?" said the Princess.

"Madam, truth will reveal itself in its own good time," rejoined the ex-Prime Minister.

"Not so," said the Princess. "Does not the pearl remain hid until the diver plunges into the sea? I have deeply explored spiritual phenomena, and there have been vouchsafed to me visions so translucent that they were indiscernible to any but the most highly spiritualized, and many other wondrous experiences have been accorded to me, the serviceableness of which will doubtless be revealed in days to——"

"Madam," interrupted the ex-Chief Physician, "does not your Royal Highness know that the senses respond to impressions from within as well as to impressions from without?"

"Sir, what mean you by that?" inquired the Princess, frowning.

"Madam," said the ex-Chief Physician, boldly, "I mean that in the brain messages may be transmitted from the ideational centres to the sensory ganglia, and that these messages from within produce a similar effect to the impressions caused by external stimuli: hence, at the suggestion of the ideational centres, sights may be seen and sounds heard, nay, even tastes, odours and tactual impressions perceived which are not objective at all, but purely imaginary."

"Do you mean, sir," cried the Princess, "that you think I *invent* the spiritual manifestations in which I rejoice?"

"That which your Royal Highness so aptly suggests is what your Royal Highness's humble servant is fain to think," said the ex-Chief Physician with a low bow.

"If my chief executioner were not confined to his bed, and very ill from the effects of an awful vision which was given to him last night, in which he saw all the executioners of all time waging war against all the executed, and the executed, forming a mighty army, with their heads beneath their arms, subduing them, I would have you beheaded," said the Princess.

The ex-Chief Physician bowed again, and the ex-Prime Minister hastened to say that, putting aside all explanations that might be offered as to the objectivity or subjectivity of spiritual manifestations, he would come to the point by declaring that he and all the

rest of her Royal Highness's faithful subjects earnestly desired that the Princess might show herself more gracious towards them, and to this end, trusting that the indulgence of pure and healthy domestic joys would render her more mindful of the mundane needs of her people, they humbly entreated their royal mistress to enter forthwith into the holy bonds of wedlock.

At this the Princess blushed, for she was but a woman, notwithstanding her predilection for the Supernatural.

"But I do not wish to marry," she said.

"Nevertheless, we venture to implore your Royal Highness to reconsider the matter," said the ex-Prime Minister.

"But whom should I marry? Whom *could* I marry?" said the Princess.

"Madam," began the ex-Prime Minister, "there is the Prince of——"

But the Princess cut him short.

"A Prince is nought to me," she said. "What have I in common with ordinary mortals who have no cognizance of the spirit-world, who are too gross and carnal to discern the invisible or to apprehend the impalpable, and whose organizations are too coarse to receive incorporeal manifestations? Nay, my lord, if you would have me wed, you must find for me a husband so completely *en rapport* with the spirit world that he shall pass through the Crucial Test, wherewith I shall try him, and retain not only my esteem and confidence but my adoring reverence."

At these words, the ex-Prime Minister and the ex-Chief Physician drooped their heads dejectedly, while a faint murmur of applause arose from the thin lips of the courtiers. But a Child, who was seated on a stool at the Princess's knee, the orphan son of her dearest friend, asked, "Godmother, what is the Test?"

All listened for the answer. But the Princess was moody and would not explain.

"When the time comes you will know," she said.

Then the two ex-officers retired, sad and desponding, and the Princess withdrew into a dim chamber, where daily at that hour was heard the music of unseen violins, played high in the air by phantom fiddlers.

The ex-Ministers rubbed their heads and thought. What was this Crucial Test wherewith the Princess should try her would-be husband? And who would be found to submit himself to the ordeal? The two good gentlemen were sorely perplexed. But a rich princess need not remain single long, and, as in the legends of fairyland, suitors quickly presented themselves, each one confident that the Test—however hard it might be—was no harder a nut than he could conveniently crack.

Upon each suitor who was brought before her, the Princess turned her eyes languidly.

"What is your title to seek my hand?" she said then.

And one offered her a pack of cards and bade her name the card that should spring from among its fellows. And another produced lighted Chinese lanterns out of the Lord High Chamberlain's hat. And another caused his limbs to be tied with cords in many knots and had himself shut up within a small space with a cigarette paper laid upon his knees, and lo, in a moment the curtain was withdrawn and the cigarette was rolled and between the lips of him who still sat there bound with knotted cords. But the princess only smiled and said, "That is mere sleight of hand and any juggler can do as much."

Then others came, relating how in the stillest hours of night in locked chambers, friends who were at a great distance appeared to them, and how they had learnt afterwards that at that moment the friend had died, and telling of warning voices which had kept them from starting on some fateful journey and of prophetic dreams which had been realized, and of strange coincidences and marvellous presentiments and eccentric exhibitions of psychic phenomena. But the Princess still smiled and said, "These are only the normal displays of spiritual force and the lowest servants in my scullery have had manifestations as marked and as unusual."

And some of the suitors went away crestfallen. But some pleaded to be allowed to undergo the Test, and to these the Princess said, "Tell me of what I am thinking. This is not the Test, but if you can tell me that, you will have accomplished something."

Then each strove to read the royal lady's thought and one guessed one thing and one another. But none could divine, for the Princess was always thinking that each of her suitors was more tedious and unacceptable than the one that came before.

At last there arrived a young and handsome Professor of Mental Physiology.

"Madam," said he, "there is no need that I should try your patience by exhibiting tricks of legerdemain. All juggleries can I perform. But they are nothing to me, since I can set the Thames on fire, draw blood from a stone, run the gauntlet of criticism, pick a quarrel, nurse revenge, put a rod in pickle, break my mother's heart, teach my grandmother to suck eggs, catch a weazel asleep, get out of bed on the wrong side, raise the wind, play with fire, kill two birds with one stone, keep myself close, laugh on the wrong side of my mouth, save my breath to cool my porridge, keep a secret, steal a kiss, hug the shore, hatch a plot, drive a bargain, swallow an indignity, make a mountain out of a molehill, reduce an argument to an absurdity, double my pace, make money fly, find a verdict, preserve my temper, mince matters, create confusion, magnify my own importance, rivet your attention, take the bull by the horns, and lose myself in a crowd.

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I can also play upon the imagination and fool a woman to the top of her bent. Madam, your Royal Highness doubtless perceives that my relations with the unseen powers are extraordinary. May it be that to your Royal Highness's most humble servant shall be vouchsafed to pass the Crucial Test, which shall be the key to so great ecstasies!"

Then the Princess regarded him with favour, and she said, "Sir, how did you obtain this *recueillement* with the Supernatural?"

And the Professor made answer, "Madam, I have obtained it by the most careful and incessant cultivation of a certain part of the brain, within which lies the power of being in touch with the unapproached and the unapproachable. In most human brains these supra-normal ganglia are merely rudimentary, and to few is it given so to develop these higher convolutions that their mystic powers are declared. But before these few are spread the marvellous mysteries of the other world, of which grosser creatures know nought, and which they—in their ignorant and undeveloped state—deride."

"Professor," said the Princess, earnestly, "how can I attain this supra-normal development?"

"Madam," said the Professor, "by perpetually dwelling upon the supra-normal idea, the supra-normal nerves are set in motion and the supra-normal groove becomes fixed, and presently the supra-normal ganglia dominate the whole existence. The rest of the mind may be dormant. The senses may be dulled and the intellect atrophied. But the supra-normal groove will deepen and the supra-normal nerves will work with more and more activity, till the Highest State shall be achieved—even constant communion with the unperceived and the imperceptible. But if I mistake not Madam, your Royal Highness has already reached this Ultimate State."

"I have thought of the Supernatural and of nothing else for many years," said the Princess.

"And you have perceived?" said he, tentatively.

"Many wonderful things have been manifested to me," said she. "Only this morning the Idea of a Strangled Abbot accompanied me from the moment of waking until noon. I did not see it, neither did I hear its last gurgling breath, nor yet did I feel it. But it was given to me to apprehend that it was there by a subtile and indescribable sense, which is vague and mystic, and yet sharp and powerful as a Damascene blade."

"The Supra-normal is ever wonderful," murmured the Professor.

"Yet there are some who call my delicate perceptions abnormal, who attribute my visions to a diseased and morbid fancy, who impress upon me the manifestations I have received are entirely subjective," said the Princess.

"Those are the coarse and grovelling natures which cannot soar to the cultivation of the supra-normal faculties," said the Professor

with warmth. "The supra-normal faculties of such are more rudimentary than those of the brutes, for even dogs bark at we know not what, and howl dismally when death draws near."

"Then you do not think that my delight in spiritual communion evidences an unsound mind?" said the Princess.

"A thousand times, no!" cried the Professor, with much energy. "I believe that it indicates the evolution of a sixth sense, which shall substantiate the fourth dimension, discover the chemical properties of spirit, and beside which the functions of the normal senses and the action of the normal brain shall seem like sight and hearing and intelligence in a month-old babe. To your Royal Highness is it permitted to be one of the pioneers of this new, splendid and unimaginable development."

The Princess would have indefinitely prolonged this conversation, for even to a lady whose supra-normal faculties are acute it is not altogether disagreeable to be *en rapport* with a handsome young man. But at this juncture the Prime Minister came forward and begged respectfully to inquire whether the Princess would graciously deign to inform him if she intended to apply the Crucial Test to the last arrived suitor.

Then the Princess, turning her large and speaking eyes upon the Professor, said, "Tell me of what I am thinking. This is not the Test, but if you can tell that, you will have accomplished something."

"Madam," said the Professor bold, "it becomes not me to read your Royal Highness's thoughts aloud. But should an oracle reply to your Royal Highness's command, would it not say, '*Sweet is the rapture of mutual understanding and the lasting companionship of equal minds is beyond praise?*'"

Then the Princess's pale cheek flushed red, for she had indeed been thinking that if she could bestow her hand upon any, it would be upon this handsome and sympathetic professor, whose mind seemed to be a counterpart of her own. So she said with confusion, "That will pass, Professor. My thoughts were possibly of some seductive theme."

"Then may I hope that your Royal Highness will impart to me what is the Crucial Test?" said he.

"It is a hard thing," returned she, sighing, for she was reluctant to risk losing the Professor's society.

"Nevertheless, I will overcome it," said he.

Then the Princess groaned within herself, not daring to believe that the Professor should succeed. But at last she said, "Professor, if upon a certain day, in my sight and in the sight of all my court, you, by your own volition, be snatched away wholly and taken utterly out of our fleshly cognizance; and if, returning to us, you be etherealized as no mortal man has ever been, and if you have had discernments such as no human senses have ever opened unto, then shall I know that your relations with the Super-

natural are absolute, and then shall I trust in you completely and adore you with the utmost reverence. This is the Test."

Then all gazed at the Professor expecting that he should be daunted. But he said, "Madam, be it as your Royal Highness desires. In eight days will I be ready to undergo the Test, and then will I—in your Royal Highness's sight, and in the sight of all the court—vanish wholly from your fleshly cognizance; and returning after a space, I will be fair and spiritualized beyond thought, and my knowledge shall transcend all human discrimination. Now retire we all and let us spend our days fasting and in contemplation, so that our grosser parts may be deadened and our supra-normal faculties intensified to the uttermost. And beware, Madam, lest by the indulgence of the smallest normal thought your Royal Highness's supra-normal faculties be but for an instant diminished, for if your Royal Highness's supra-normal faculties should abate their keenness and their expectancy only for the twinkling of an eye, it is most sure that some portion of the mystic drama will escape your Royal Highness's apprehension, and in this case, should the veil of the universe be rent asunder and the spirit-chorus come to meet you, your Royal Highness would be deaf and blind to these inconceivable glories. And I, Madam," he added, in a voice audible to the Princess alone, "I should be cruelly disappointed. For I think that your Royal Highness has developed a mental possibility and a cerebral convolution hitherto unknown among men, and if I find that I am mistaken, if I be compelled to own that your Royal Highness's faculties are but normal and undeveloped—truly, Madam, if I find this to be so, my fate will be indeed bitter, and I shall be of all men the most wretched. I shall have passed through the Crucial Test and I shall be etherealized beyond compare. But if my royal mistress stand without, of what avail will it be that my supra-normal powers are unimpeachable? For without you, Madam, your Royal Highness's faithful servant ceases to exist."

Then all withdrew, and upon the eighth day, when the sun was low, the court was reassembled, and the Professor stood in the midst, clothed in a strange garment, whose texture might not be discovered nor its hues named, and an ineffable smile was upon his lips. And the courtiers were lean and pale and heavy-eyed, for they had fasted greatly and endured much contemplation, and the pallor and emaciation of the Princess was more than all of theirs. But the Princess's godson was comely and well nourished.

Then the Professor, standing in the sight of the Princess and of all the court, raised his hands and cried with a loud voice, and immediately they saw him not, neither did their eyes behold him during the time that one might have counted two score. Then a voice said, "Welcome me, O my Princess!" and again they saw the Professor standing in their midst. And he said, "Madam, did I not see that time hath laid no hand upon your Royal Highness's

countenance, I should say that my absence had endured for centuries. For that which no human language can utter has been revealed to me, and the unspeakable and indescribable has been shown to me, and the knowledge of the Supernatural has transfused me and etherealized me as no mortal man hath ever been heretofore; and this your Royal Highness's intensified supra-normal faculties can well perceive."

And the Princess gave her hand to the Professor, and promised to rely upon him for evermore and to adore him with reverence.

But the Princess's godson said, "The Professor never disappeared at all. He stood there the whole time, and I saw him snap his fingers and wink."

Then the Professor said mildly, "Doubtless, my child, you thought you saw me standing there. But you looked with the eyes of your body, and so brief was my absence that it seemed to you I had never gone—as, when you spin a top with a red spot, so rapid is the movement of the top that the red spot seems ever in sight."

And the Professor took the Princess's hand and led her away to the banqueting-hall, and the next day the nuptials were celebrated with great pomp, and the Professor ruled the Princess and her dominions from that time, and there was prosperity in that land.

But the Princess caused her godson to be whipped, and commanded that he should be sent to a Haunted School.

"SHEBA."

A STUDY OF GIRLHOOD.

By "RITA,"

AUTHOR OF "DAME DURDEN," "DARRY AND JOAN," "THE LADYE NANCY,"
"GRETCHEN," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXXV.

SHEBA RECEIVES AN OFFER OF MARRIAGE.

IF Sheba had not been so much absorbed in these new ideas, and so much occupied in thinking out a plan for the book she had made up her mind to write, she might have observed a difference in the way she was treated at home—a certain curiosity and deference in her stepfather's manner, and tolerance and friendly complacency in that of her mother; but she did not notice the change, only she wondered sometimes that Maxime de Pharamond was so constant a visitor. He dined at least three times a week with the Levisons; but as he generally devoted himself to Bessie Saxton, Sheba put her down as the attraction.

One evening Hex put in an appearance, and Sheba received him with a little trepidation, remembering how irate he had been at the teaching episode. He had altered very much. He was taller now than Sheba herself, and had all the airs and conceits of young manhood, and many of its incipient vices.

He treated his sister with a good-humoured condescension—told her she wasn't half bad-looking, but *dowdy*, and that she was a fool to work when she might live at her ease in luxury. More than this he had been forbidden to say. He remained at home a week, spending half his days in bed reading novels—the other half playing billiards with Pharamond, who had struck up a great friendship with him, or lounging about the Sydney streets with a cigar in his mouth.

I have said before that the Levisons only moved in very second-rate society, despite their wealth, and Mrs. Levison had never yet had the honour of an invitation to Government House. However, this desire of her heart seemed now possible of achievement, owing to Pharamond's interest. She had manœuvred for it very skilfully, so she imagined, and with no idea that the astute Frenchman saw what she was angling for.

One day the longed-for missive arrived, and "Mr. and Mrs. Levison and Miss Ormatroyd" were invited to one of those "omnium gatherum" receptions that were more of a condescension than a compliment.

But Mrs. Levison was perfectly radiant, and when the count dropped in about five o'clock that same afternoon, she received him with a welcome almost rapturous.

He thought it was now time to open fire, and without much preamble explained to Mrs. Levison that it was customary in his country to ask the parents of a *demoiselle* for permission to marry her. He told her he was rich, and had large estates in the south of France, so that the question of *dot* was not important, though no doubt the rich Mr. Levison would not let his stepdaughter come portionless to her husband. But the truth was, he loved Madlle. Ormatroyd—had loved her from the first—and now asked permission to address her, having explained, as in honour bound, his intentions.

Mrs. Levison grew quite pale with emotion.

"Really," she said, "my dear count, you honour me. Any mother could have but one reply to your generous proposal. I shall be too delighted to receive you here as a suitor for my daughter's hand; but she—I fear she is so young, so indifferent to marriage. You must not be in too great a hurry to speak to her."

The count smiled—a little oddly.

"Perhaps," he said, "you, madame, would speak, and prepare her a little. I know how timid they are, these *ingénues*, but no husband objects to innocence—at first."

"Certainly, I will speak," said Mrs. Levison, colouring a little as she met those bold smiling eyes. "I am sure she will be deeply sensible of the honour you do her. It seems surprising that you should have chosen her for a wife when you must have seen so many beautiful women in London and Paris."

"True," he said; "but the women of society are too alike to please me, in beauty, as in morals. Now, your daughter—she is fresh, original, clever; she will be beautiful too—ah, that without doubt; and there is about her an air—proud, wild, untamable—a something altogether different from the ordinary *demoiselle*."

"Good heavens!" thought Mrs. Levison; "what can the men see in Sheba? There was Noel Hill, and now Count Pharamond. To me she has always appeared so stupid, and ugly, and uninteresting."

Aloud she said, "Ah! you are a lover, count, so one must excuse flattery; but indeed you have made me most happy. My sweet child," she added with emotion; "what a bright future lies before her."

To assert this, Mrs. Levison's nature must have been singularly

trustful, considering that she knew nothing at all of Pharamond's antecedents or character. Her husband had made his acquaintance merely through a business transaction, and for the rest they had but his own word. He might have been an adventurer, a criminal—anything; yet she was prepared to fling her innocent young daughter into his arms without a question as to her own feelings on the subject.

One hears a great deal about the beauty and unselfishness of maternity, but observation and experience lead me to say that maternity with marriageable daughters seldom presents a noble or self-denying aspect. The fact of an eligible suitor is invariably hailed with alacrity—eligible, of course, applying to worldly goods and such unimportant details as position, or social dignity. The *moral* character is rarely passed under such microscopic scrutiny as the eligible! Wealth hides a multitude of sins to the eyes of a prospective mother-in-law. Yet the world is full of the cant of the *holiness* of maternity.

There are plenty of women who pose to their offspring as the most martyred and unselfish of beings, simply because the office of maternity has involved a little pain, a little anxiety and an amount of self-denial that is very often obligatory.

If a woman marries she must undertake the drawbacks of the conjugal state, as well as its triumphs, pleasures or advantages. If children are part and parcel of her new condition, she is only obeying a law of nature, and her doing so has nothing meritorious about it.

When the moral relationship steps in and the duties of child and parent begin to assume a definite shape, then it is time enough to talk of unselfishness; and then, too, we find how few have really stood the crucial test.

When Count Pharamond had bowed himself out that afternoon, Mrs. Levison remained for a long time seated in the drawing-room, taking counsel with herself as to how she would break the news to Sheba. She was a little bit afraid that the girl would not be as elated as she herself felt. True, of late she had been much more amiable, and indeed had seemed to like Pharamond's society; but then, as Mrs. Levison finished with a sigh, one never *could* count on Sheba—never know what whim or fancy would seize her.

In the midst of her reflections the door opened and her daughter entered. Mrs. Levison looked up.

"Is that you, my dear?" she said, with that needless questioning of what is self-evident that helps modern conversation so largely.

"Yes," said Sheba, coming into the half-dusk of the big splend did room; "you are alone—what a wonder."

"I have had a visitor," said her mother urbanely; "but he has just left. It was your devoted admirer, Count Pharamond."

"My—devoted admirer!" echoed Sheba, as she flung aside her hat and gloves. "Since when? I thought he was Bessie's."

"You were mistaken, then," said Mrs. Levison with unconcealed triumph, fancying that she had detected an encouraging jealousy in the girl's remark. "It is you whom he admires, and he has done so from the first."

Sheba laughed carelessly. "He does me honour," she said; "I can't say, however, that I appreciate his admiration—or return it."

"Now," thought Mrs. Levison, "there she begins. It is really surprising how that girl manages to aggravate me, even when I am in the best of tempers." She tried to control herself. She felt that this was a case in which diplomacy would count for more than compulsion. She resolved to be diplomatic. "My dear child," she said blandly, "you are the most innocent and unworldly of creatures. I know that, but you are quite old enough to get a little worldly knowledge into your head—clever as it may be. Some day, I suppose, you will do as all women do—when they get the chance—marry. Still, it doesn't do for a girl to wait too long, or to be too particular, and really in a country like this I am sure eligible husbands are most difficult to find. Therefore, I must tell you that a great honour has been paid me to-day, and to you, through me. I have, in fact, received an offer of marriage for you from Count de Pharamond."

"Mother!" gasped Sheba, stepping back a pace and turning white as death.

"No doubt you are astonished," persisted Mrs. Levison. "It is really quite incredible what he could have seen in you—a man who might have married into the best society in Europe, and then to choose a little unfashionable colonial. However, there is no accounting for men's tastes. He has done everything quite *en règle*—quite as it is done in the best French society. He came to me and laid his proposals before me, wishing to know whether I approved his suit in the first instance."

"And what did you say?" asked Sheba, recovering from her first astonishment, and feeling now rather amused than otherwise at her mother's complacent manner.

"Say? What could I say? What would any right-feeling Christian mother say who had her child's welfare at heart? I said I was deeply conscious of the honour, and would convey his offer to you."

"And having done that," said Sheba brusquely, "you can tell him when he calls again that I am *not* so conscious of its being an honour, and have certainly neither inclination nor intention of accepting it."

Mrs. Levison kept silence for a moment. She was bitterly enraged, but for once she felt it would be a losing game if she gave way to violence. Sheba was obstinate and self-willed, but she could be easily guided by kindness. She sank back in her chair

and gave a little sob. The girl sprang forward instantly and threw herself on her knees beside her. "Mother," she cried, "what is it—what is the matter? Don't cry; oh, please don't cry."

But Mrs. Levison's sobs redoubled. "Oh, Sheba, Sheba," she wailed, "how you always distress me; you are my only daughter and I'm sure I love you, and wish to make you happy, but it always seems as if you delighted in doing the very reverse of what I wish. Such a chance—such a splendid offer! Why, you would mix with crowned heads, go into the world, become a celebrated and beautiful woman—and just for a whim, a child's fancy, you want to throw it all away. You will break my heart, you really will."

"Dear mother," said the girl earnestly, "if you love me as you say, you would not want me to be miserable, and I should be that if I married Count Pharamond. I don't like him; I never did; he is bold, coarse, and I am sure, cruel. Besides, I don't want to marry, and as it is myself I am to give away, surely I ought to have some voice in the matter."

"Such an offer—such a position," still lamented Mrs. Levison between her sobs.

"But if I don't care for them how do they concern *you*?" asked the straightforward Sheba. "I should be in another country—probably you would never see my splendour, or my position. It could not be any great satisfaction, I should think, only to *speak* of them. That is what it amounts to, and for my own part I would not accept Count Pharamond as a husband, even if he had a throne to offer me instead of a title. I don't care for him——"

"Do not talk so foolishly," exclaimed her mother, dropping her handkerchief at last, and her sobs with it. "It is enough to exasperate a saint to hear you. Such a chance will never occur again. I am sure of that, and as years go on you will always regret not taking my advice now. Bessie Saxton would not need to be asked twice."

"No," said Sheba quietly; "once would be enough, but then—I am not quite like Bessie Saxton."

"I wish to Heaven you were!" cried Mrs. Levison with pardonable energy. "She is admirable in every sense of the word. I am so fond of her that I have asked her to stay on here when the others leave Sydney. You are no companion to me—none whatever—and my drives are so lonely, and as for dresses, why, you never even *seem* to see whether I have a new gown on or not."

"I thought," said the girl gravely, "that Dolly more than made up for *my* blindness."

"Dolly!" cried Mrs. Levison, "a spoilt pert minx." Then with another burst of emotion she went on, "It *is* hard to have only one daughter and to see her turning out as you are doing. What do you expect will become of you? You have no fortune—you are no beauty—and if you live the drudging life of a governess

you will soon lose your one marketable possession—youth. A nice future then awaits you."

"Perhaps," said Sheba, "I have another marketable possession, as you delicately put it—*brains*; they may enable me to live, even without beauty or fortune."

"Oh, no doubt," sneered Mrs. Levison; "you think yourself very clever, but there is such a thing as being too self-satisfied. I tell you again that if you refuse this offer you will repent it as long as you live. Mr. Levison will be furious, and I—I really think disappointment and sorrow will make an old woman of me."

"I am very sorry," said Sheba rising to her feet. "Perhaps the count would wait for—Dolly. It is only a question of nine or ten years, and he admires youth."

"Don't be an idiot," cried Mrs. Levison, losing her temper at last, as she invariably did in all their arguments, however much she might have determined to keep it. "Now listen to me. I will give you a week to reflect; by that time I hope you will have seen the folly of throwing away such a chance. The count perfectly adores you, and I am sure you have given him every encouragement. It would be perfectly shameful now to throw him over. The act of a heartless coquette."

"Coquette!" cried Sheba, her face growing scarlet. "That is not true, mother. I have never encouraged him. You asked him to the house; you made him take me into dinner; you threw us together as much as you possibly could, but I—I did nothing; I rather avoided him, as you know. I am not to blame if he credits me with your good intentions."

"Very well, Sheba," said her mother, drawing herself up and growing very white. "You have said enough. Things have come to a crisis between us, and I mean to decide once for all. I will *not* let you openly defy me under my own roof. I have been too indulgent hitherto, and *this* is the result—direct disobedience. Well, it shall be put a stop to now—at once. You do not go out of this house without my permission. You do not give another lesson to this German's child, or leave my roof under any pretence whatever. As long as you are under age you are under your parents' authority, and I mean to enforce that authority—you hear me?"

"Yes," said Sheba very quietly, "I hear you."

"Then remember I am in earnest," said Mrs. Levison; "I will have no more of your obstinacy and self-will. I have been a great fool to put up with them so long. But I shall not do so for another day—another hour. Now go to your room and reflect on what I have said."

Sheba moved coldly and silently away. At the door she paused, and holding the handle in her hand, she looked back to where that passionate angry figure stood in the centre of the large room.

"Will you tell me one thing," she said in a low restrained

voice—a voice so unlike her own that her mother scarcely recognized it; "when—am I of age?"

"When you are twenty-one," said Mrs. Levison; "nearly three years hence."

"Three years," echoed the girl. "Well, mother, hear me now in my turn. For those three years I will do your bidding in all things save—marriage. But the very day the last year expires, I will leave your roof and go out into the world and earn my own living—though I have to work like a galley-slave to do it!"

"Oh no, you won't," said Mrs. Levison, with a cold slighting laugh. "I know what all that bombastic talk is worth. Long before the three years are up, my dear, you will be glad to marry any one—even Count Pharamond."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

BESSIE SAXTON HAS SUSPICIONS.

"Oh, you silly! silly! silly," cried Dolly, dancing to and fro before Sheba as she sat in her own room that evening. "Oh, you great big goose of geese! Only to think of it—such a chance, such a splendid, glorious, magnificent chance! Oh! if I were only seventeen. If I were sixteen even, I would marry that count myself."

"Would to Heaven you could," said Sheba lifting her pale face and heavy eyes to the little restless figure before her. "You have about as much heart as he has."

"Heart!" scoffed Dolly. "Phoo! What does that matter—in marrying? Papa says money is everything. Here you would have money and position—both. Why, he has great castles—*châteaux* he calls them, in France—and horses and carriages and goes to court: he has told me all that and so has mamma, and to think you won't marry him. Oh, you silly donkey of a Sheba!"

"I suppose I *am* an idiot according to your interpretation and mother's," said Sheba coldly. "You will make up for my deficiencies, however. There will be no difficulty in marrying *you* to any satyr or *roué* in the shape of a man, provided only he has the wherewithal to satisfy your extravagance."

"I don't know what you mean by satyr—or the French word," said Dolly. "Was it French—it sounded like it? But I am sure Count Pharamond is a very nice man—much nicer than most of the men who come here."

"Oh," laughed Sheba scornfully, "if it comes to contrasts——"

"Well," said Dolly, "as you look down on the Jewish men, why don't you marry a Christian? Is he a Christian—or a Roman Catholic though?"

Sheba laughed outright.

"It is time some one looked after your education," she said ; then the word "education" brought back the memory of her mother's mandate respecting her own little pupil, and her brow clouded again and she wondered what she could possibly say to Paul Meredith for breaking her engagement in this abrupt fashion.

"I couldn't believe it when mamma told me," went on the little chatterer. "That he should want to marry you was wonderful enough—but that you should say no—*no* ! You surely don't mean it, Sheba ?"

"Yes," said the girl frowning, "I do, and I don't wish to discuss the subject with you or any one. Now go away from my room. I have to write a letter."

"It is more than stupid, it is shameful," persisted Dolly, moving reluctantly away. "I could have been your bridesmaid—one of them—of course you would have had six at least, and we could have worn white lace over blue satin. Blue and white are my colours, you know, and then the cake, and the favours, and all the fun of a real wedding, and how jealous the Moss's would have been—and to think it's all spoilt just because you've said 'No.' It is downright cruel of you !"

"No doubt," said Sheba with exasperation. "Marriage of course entails nothing but just the ceremony, and fuss and finery of the day ; nothing more—no after life together !"

"Well—children—generally," said Dolly with a cunning little smile. "But you needn't think about them—just at first."

"Dolly," cried Sheba growing scarlet. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Whatever will your precocity end in ?"

"Oh, a husband and an establishment of course," said the child grinning maliciously. "I've heard about nothing else since I was three years old. I shall be quite an heiress, you know. I shall be able to pick and choose—you can't afford to do that—your own mother says so. That's why every one will think you such a fool—even your friend Bessie Saxton. Take care she doesn't catch him. She would give her ears to do it, I know."

"Are you going ?" asked Sheba wearily, as she sat down again on her chair and leaned her head on her hand.

"You are always in a hurry to get rid of me," said the child. "And I'm sure I'm the only one in the house that cares for you at all. Oh Sheba, *do, do* think over the count's offer. You will no longer be snubbed and badly treated ; you will be as grand a lady as the Governor General's wife—you could have diamonds as big as peas—much bigger than Mrs. Moss's. I know hers are only second-hand ; her husband got them from a client who had borrowed money at 50 per cent., I heard that from Sara Moss herself. Oh ! if I were only in your shoes, I'd dance for joy at the idea of such a chance. Mamma and papa can talk of nothing else. Do you know Bessie Saxton is coming to-morrow—to stay ? What-ever will she say when she hears this ?"

Sheba groaned in despair. It seemed as if nothing but main force would get rid of the irrepressible Dolly to-night.

"You don't seem at all happy as you are," she persisted, "so why don't you try another sort of life? You are not bad-looking now—but it won't last, and then you'll find yourself an old maid."

Sheba rose and seized the child by the arm. "Dolly," she said sternly, "you have said enough; now go. You don't understand my reasons, and I am not going to explain them. Leave the room at once."

Sulky and abashed the child obeyed, and Sheba at last left to herself sat down to pen a few lines to Meredith in explanation of her broken engagement. The hot tears filled her eyes as she wrote. Her life would seem so hard and dreary now without occupation and without congenial companionship. And Müller, the kind-hearted old German, what would he think of her changed resolves? Still her mother had spoken so firmly and definitely that the girl did not dream of disobeying her. Never did she remember being spoken to in such a manner since her early childhood, and she saw clearly enough that Mrs. Levison meant what she said.

A great chill and fear seemed to touch her heart as she thought of what such tyranny would mean now. Isolation—silence—pain. The absence of a face she had grown to watch and long for, as the day's one delight. The chance meeting of eyes eloquent in their very silence. But she wrote her letter all the same and it was all the colder and more formal because of the pain that shadowed every word; she wrote it and rang for a servant to post it, and then when it had actually gone, sat on there in her quiet little chamber, wondering what fresh ills Fate had in store for her.

Meanwhile the story of her folly and obstinacy was being related to her stepfather. It did not tend to increase his lukewarm affection for the girl, but it made him very furious with what he called her d——d high-flown airs. He even went so far as to declare that if she persisted in refusing Pharamond's offer he would turn her out of his house, but his wife reminded him that in all probability that would just suit the refractory girl. "She is always talking about independence," added her mother. "The best way to break her spirit is to keep her here in complete subjection, and not allow her to do anything she wishes."

"By Jove!" said Mr. Levison suddenly, "I believe you're right. No doubt those new friends would encourage her in obstinacy. Very well—give her a taste of solitary confinement; perhaps that will take the nonsense out of her. Ah!" and he turned proudly to Dolly, who was stuffing herself with raisins and *bombons* from his plate, "what a pity you didn't bring her up as I have brought *my* daughter. No fear of her turning up her nose at a good offer for some romantic nonsense about love—eh, Dolly, my pet?"

"I should think not, papa," said Dolly. "I suppose," she added reflectively, "the count wouldn't wait for *me*? You might ask him."

Mr. Levison burst into such explosive mirth over the cleverness of this remark, that his wife had left the table before he recovered either gravity or breath.

She betook herself to her own room, and thought and thought till her head ached of what she could do to make Sheba retract her refusal to marry Count Pharamond.

"She must and shall accept," she repeated with angry resolution. "I couldn't have the face to say 'No' to a titled personage—and she will be perfectly unbearable living on here for the next three years. Oh! why hadn't I a daughter like Bessie Saxton?"

* * * * *

The next day Bessie Saxton herself arrived for that visit upon which she had determined, and for which she had almost asked. When she heard the news she was almost as furious as Mrs. Levison, but for a very different reason.

She felt she had been duped and tricked by this man, and as she remembered some of his words and hints, the blood rushed in a hot tide of wrath and humiliation to her face.

Being as unreasonable as a jealous woman proverbially is, she blamed Sheba in an equal degree, and though she pretended to ally herself with Mrs. Levison, she secretly determined that the girl should never have the opportunity of changing her mind.

"There *must* be some one else," she thought. "I am sure of it, otherwise she would have jumped at such a chance. I shall find out before long, and then——"

Without finishing the reflection she went to Sheba.

The girl was sitting at a small table covered with books and papers. She sprang to her feet with a cry of delight when she saw Bessie enter.

"You have come, then?" she said. "Oh, I am so glad. I suppose you know I am in disgrace as usual?"

"You are very unlucky," said Bessie, kissing her somewhat coldly. "What is this new folly I hear of?"

"They all want me to marry that odious Count Pharamond," said Sheba passionately, "and I won't—nothing will induce me to accept him."

"Let us talk it over," said Bessie composedly. "I don't see why you should call him odious. He is the only gentleman—barring Noel Hill—that I have ever met at your house; and certainly he is a very good match."

"Oh!" cried Sheba impatiently, "when shall I hear the last of his being a good match? As if I cared for *that*!"

"Do you care for any one else?" asked Bessie, looking at her searchingly.

Sheba flushed scarlet, then grew as suddenly pale.

"Care?" she said. "I—no—of course not. I have never even thought of such a thing."

"Oh," said her friend coolly, "love doesn't always wait to be—thought of—before paying us a visit. Perhaps Noel Hill has found favour in your eyes."

Sheba laughed outright. "Noel Hill? He is just like a brother. I have never thought of him in any other way."

"Well," said Bessie, "the question is, what's to be done? Your mother and Mr. Levison are simply furious. They mean to *make* you accept this man if it is possible."

"It will never be possible," said Sheba calmly, "*never*. They may kill me if they like. I really often think I wouldn't mind if they did. I have always been unhappy—always—and no one cares for me here. They would be very glad if I was dead——"

"Oh, don't talk of anything so horrible," said Bessie with a little shiver. "Death indeed! Why, you hardly know what life is yet. But what are you going to do? Of course they can't force you to marry this man, but they can make life very unpleasant for you if you don't."

"I know that," said Sheba mournfully. "Mother has forbidden me to teach little Paul Meredith any longer, and I have had to write and explain that to his father. It is very cruel. It was the only pleasure I had."

"An odd sort of pleasure, I should fancy," said Bessie. "But then you always were such an extraordinary girl."

Then a sudden thought crossed her mind. "Perhaps it was the father who was the attraction. He is handsome enough certainly, and just the type of man to attract a romantic girl like Sheba. She is such a fool—she couldn't keep a secret from me.

. . . . I must find out."

But for the present she only plied her with skilful hints and pretended sympathy, and Sheba even confided to her the resolve she had made to write, and in discussing that engrossing subject she had almost forgotten her new trouble, when a sharp knock came at the door, and a servant entered with a card:

"Mr. Paul Meredith, if you please, to see Miss Ormatroyd."

Sheba started to her feet, her face growing as white as her dress. "Oh, Bessie," she gasped, "what am I to do? What can I say?"

Bessie looked at her white face and great startled eyes. "I do believe——" she said to herself. Then she laughed aloud. "Don't be so terrified," she said; "go and tell him the facts as they stand. Your mother wants you to marry this French count, and because you won't, she refuses to let you do anything you yourself wish."

"Shall I tell him—that?" faltered Sheba, growing red and pale with emotion. "Won't he think it very odd?"

"Not in the least, I imagine," said her friend dryly. "And you know you have a predilection for speaking the truth."

Sheba moved towards the door in a shy, absorbed fashion, and Bessie's cold blue eyes studied her intently.

"I am sure I am right," she said to herself. "She will tell him exactly how matters are, and then—well, then I suppose there will be a crisis!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A CRISIS.

WITH trembling fingers Sheba turned the handle of the drawing-room door and found herself in the presence of Paul Meredith. He came towards her quickly and held out his hand.

"Miss Ormatroyd," he said, "what is the meaning of all this? Your note was such a surprise to me; I felt I must have an explanation. They told me your mother was out so I asked for you. I—I really could not understand what you meant by saying you could not come any more to my house. It is as if—as if—you had not been treated with proper respect, or consideration there."

"Oh, no, no," cried Sheba impetuously. "Pray do not think that. I must have expressed myself very badly, but I was so distressed—so unhappy——"

He saw she was trembling violently, and still holding her hand he led her to a chair. "Look upon me as a friend," he said, "and tell me all that has happened. Am I to blame?"

"No," cried Sheba, flushing hotly, "it is not you—it is—myself. They never wished me to teach—still my mother did not absolutely forbid it—but now——"

"Yes?" he said inquiringly as she paused.

She lifted her great sorrowful eyes to his, and that look went to his heart, it was so pathetic and so patient.

"I don't know if I ought to tell you," she stammered, her colour changing with every word. "They wish me to—marry."

"Marry!" he started as he echoed the word, and looked at her again with soft and troubled eyes.

"Marry," Sheba continued. "Some one I don't like—and because I refused they have forbidden me to do anything that will take me away from home; that is all. I did not like to tell you when I wrote."

"I should think not," he said, his face growing dark with anger. "What an infamous thing, and who is the individual whose suit is so favoured?"

"A French count who visits here. The Count de Pharamond," said Sheba colouring shyly.

"Good heavens!" he cried passionately. "That blackguard!"

Sheba looked up in surprise. "Is he a bad man?" she asked simply. "I felt it—but I could not say why."

"Yes," answered Meredith curtly. "He is bad—thoroughly bad—but report says he is enormously rich. I suppose that gilds even his sins in the eyes of your parents. Have you known him long?"

"No," cried Sheba; "only a few weeks——"

"And have you refused—decidedly refused to marry him?" asked Meredith.

"Yes," she said quickly. "But he spoke to my mother, not to me, and I don't think she has told him that I said no."

"But," he said, "it seems very preposterous that for this reason you are not to fulfil your engagement. I left Paul crying his eyes out. Nothing would satisfy him but that I should come here and speak to you myself. It is very unfortunate," he added, "for I am leaving Sydney soon and I felt so happy in thinking you would be with him and prevent his missing me. Perhaps if I were to speak to your mother——"

"I am afraid," Sheba said sorrowfully, "it would be no use. I did not know that I had no right to make any engagement without their sanction. They seemed glad enough to get rid of me just at that time."

He walked up and down the long room—his brows knit—his face dark with anger. "You are not happy—here?" he said abruptly.

"No," she said, the tears gathering in her eyes. "Most unhappy."

"I thought so—I felt it," he went on, speaking stormily and yet with deep feeling. "I never said much to you, but I could read your face and I knew your life young as it is had known troubles; so has mine, as I told you when we met again. Perhaps I should not speak, perhaps I am saying too much, but if it lay in my power—if I could make you happy——"

"You," she cried—and startled and confused and vaguely glad she sprang to her feet, and gazed at his troubled face and kindling eyes.

"I"—he said very low, "I never thought to say it again to living woman. I set myself against you—I avoided you as you know—but—well, fate is too strong for me I suppose—I love you, Sheba. Will you trust me? Will you share my wandering life and end all this unhappiness and tyranny? I think I could make you happy . . . if you would let me."

Sheba had listened like one in a dream. It seemed as if she was in a dream—standing there in the big shadowy room with its closed shutters and faintly perfumed air—standing there and hearing such words from this her hero—the one man, who all unknown to herself, had peopled her fancies and lived in her memory since the first hour his eyes had met her own.

Her heart throbbed so fiercely it nearly suffocated her. The light and the shadows seemed to swim hazily before her sight.

"You cannot mean it," she cried faintly. "It is out of pity you speak. I—I should not have told you about this——"

She sank down in her chair and hid her face in her hands. A stifled sob escaped her. It seemed as if the last drop had filled her cup of shame and perplexity.

He came near, and stooping touched her hands with his lips. "Do not weep," he said; "I would not pain you for all the world. Is it so hard to believe I love you? If a man like Count Pharamond has been subjugated, that might teach you your power."

Her hands were drawn into his—her eyes, still humid with tears, looked back at his own. She seemed to realize at last that he spoke truly, and her whole nature yielded to the passionate and enthralling force of awakened feeling.

"Oh," she cried brokenly, "I am not worthy of your love; you are so great, so famous—and I——"

"Indeed, I am but a graceless singer," he said and drew her gently to his heart, and touched almost with reverence the trembling mobile lips, "but you will be to me inspiration—glory—life."

"I—oh no," she murmured, trembling greatly at the strangeness of that first embrace, which made her heart throb like a bird in the hand of its captor.

"If—you love me," he said, "and I think you do——"

"Yes," she said simply. "I did not know—I hardly dared to think—but I know now."

"That is well," he said, drawing a long deep breath. "And after confessing it you need not worry yourself any more; I will fight your battles for you——"

He raised her head, and looked long and earnestly into those great, deep, wonderful eyes. What wells of truth and tenderness and purity they were.

As they thus stood oblivious to all else, tranced in that half embrace, the door opened and Mrs. Levison swept in.

* * * * *

As a matter of history, it has not yet been recorded that the sight of one's daughter enacting on her own responsibility the *rôle* of the female character in that celebrated picture of "The Huguenot," has ever been greeted with special cordiality.

Mrs. Levison was not destined to prove an exception to the rule; perhaps, however, she found—as other mothers before and after her time have found—that the other character in the affecting tableau was just the very last person she would have desired to see in it.

Bristling and irate, she darted a vengeful glance at Meredith and then at Sheba, and said icily:

"Pray may I ask who is this—gentleman?"

Feeling he was in a false position, Paul stammered feebly that he had called to inquire Miss Ormatroyd's reason for breaking her engagement. "For the rest," he added, gaining courage at sight of Sheba's terror, "I am quite ready to give you an explanation of . . . of what must seem a little—extraordinary——"

"Extraordinary!" cried Mrs. Levison, her face growing red and furious at the coolness and audacity of this stranger; "I should think it was—extraordinary."

"Perhaps," he said, "when I tell you that I love your daughter, and that she does me the honour to return that love, you will allow that——"

"Allow! Love! What preposterous nonsense! I—I don't understand how you dare speak of such things—you, a total stranger."

"Pardon me. I am not a stranger to your daughter, and I am endeavouring to explain——"

"I don't want any explanations," interrupted Mrs. Levison passionately, "and I have nothing to say to you on such a subject except that I have other views for my daughter. Even if I had not, I should not listen to a person who takes advantage of a girl's unprotected position to make clandestine love to her unknown to her rightful guardians."

"Mother!" cried Sheba, her eyes flashing indignantly, "do not accuse Mr. Meredith of dishonourable conduct. He never spoke one word to me that all the world might not have heard, and I never even guessed that he did me the honour of caring for me, till a few moments ago."

"Honour!" sneered Mrs. Levison furiously. "A fine honour! But I am not here to discuss the matter. Leave the room instantly, Sheba—*instantly*," stamping her foot as the girl gave no sign of attention. "As for this presumptuous individual, I will send Mr. Levison to him with an answer. I have given my opinion; and, now, sir, I must ask you to leave the house."

She waved her arm towards the door, but Meredith only advanced to Sheba and took both her hands in his.

"One moment, madam," he said proudly. "You have insulted me most grossly, but for that I care little. I must tell you, however, that I consider my love for your daughter and hers for me gives me a right to protect her from the unkindness and tyranny she experiences at home. Whenever she chooses to leave that home and seek my protection, I shall be ready to receive her. I will make her my wife to-morrow if she will only say the word."

"She will not dare to say the word, as you call it," cried Mrs. Levison, trembling now with passion and baffled ambition. "Bad and bold as her conduct is, I yet trust she has not *quite* forgotten the duty and obedience she owes *me*. As long as she is under age she shall remain under my roof, and she cannot marry without my consent."

Paul Meredith smiled. "I think," he said, "you are speaking somewhat foolishly. "She is over sixteen, and quite of an age to marry with, or without your consent. I am sorry to have to speak so plainly, but you have brought it on yourself, and I fail to see why you should insult me without waiting to hear who or what I am. If I gave up my profession to-morrow and went back to England, I should be entitled to a position equal to that of this not very reputable French count whose suit you favour."

"If you were a prince of the blood it would make no difference to my determination," said Mrs. Levison loftily. "I consider you have behaved as no gentleman would ever have done, and, as I said before, I have other views for my daughter."

He bowed coldly, and looked once more at the trembling white-faced girl by his side.

"Courage, my dearest," he said softly. "Remember I shall be true to you, come what may; and now, as it seems useless to prolong this unpleasant interview, I will say good-evening."

He took up his hat, gave one long pressure to Sheba's hand, bowed ceremoniously to her mother, and left the room.

As the door closed Mrs. Levison turned on Sheba like a tigress. She was in far too great a passion to weigh her speech, or care what terms of wrath and opprobrium she showered on the girl.

Her coarse, cruel words tore off every illusion that had sheltered and made beautiful this idyl of her love. She heard her conduct described as immodest, indelicate, hypocritical, false, vile, treacherous, every epithet indeed that passion and injustice could frame into utterance.

Many as had been the painful scenes between her mother and herself, there had never been a scene like this. For Sheba was determined to be true to her own heart, and her mother was equally determined she should not. Like most tyrannical people, Mrs. Levison could not stand opposition. It made her cruel, vindictive and irrational. She stormed and raved, and grew more and more wrathful every moment, while Sheba only stood there mute and still, but with that resolute look on her white face that her mother knew of old, and which made her inwardly ashamed of her undignified anger, and vaguely conscious that it was as the sea's futile waves dashing against the immovability of a rock.

"Now listen—once for all," she said when she had fairly exhausted her vocabulary of abuse. "I have made up my mind that you *shall* marry Pharamond, and no one else, so the sooner you give up this romantic nonsense the better. Go to your room, and don't leave it until you are prepared to obey my wishes. If you come to your senses I will perhaps endeavour to forgive your undutiful conduct. For the present I would rather not see your face at all. I am ashamed even to think a daughter of mine, brought up as you have been brought up, should be guilty of such a low,

miserable intrigue as this that I have discovered. I shall have poor little Dolly contaminated next."

The bathos of that conclusion made Sheba laugh, despite her distress and perplexity.

"You had better keep her from me, then," she said as she prepared to leave the room. "And if your forgiveness depends on my marrying Pharamond, I am afraid it will be a long time before it is required."

"I say you *shall* marry him," said Mrs. Levison fiercely, stamping her foot as she spoke.

"And I," said Sheba resolutely and quietly, "say I shall *not*. Nothing will induce me to do so—nothing!"

Mrs. Levison's face grew ashy and haggard. She was far more bent on this match now than she had been before, partly because she hated to find herself worsted in any combat, and partly because she really considered that a marriage with an opera singer, "a puppet of the stage," as she termed Meredith, would be an everlasting disgrace. She was terribly obstinate and prejudiced in some things, and no amount of argument could convince her that a *gentleman* would ever make music, or acting his profession, when there were honourable, lucrative posts, such as clerkships in merchants' offices and banks, to be had almost for the asking. Delighted as she would have been to see Sheba married, she yet had not the slightest intention of allowing her to marry any one like Meredith, and with the proposal of Count Pharamond still ringing in her ears, she could not even *think* calmly of her daughter's audacious suitor.

She threw herself, exhausted and weakly crying, on a couch as the door closed on Sheba. How she pitied herself for the misfortune of possessing such a daughter. Why could she not be as other girls, even as Bessie Saxton?

Just then the door opened again, and Bessie put her head in.

"Gracious!" she cried. "What *has* happened? Sheba passed me just now like a tornado, and has locked herself into her room, and now you—my dear Mrs. Levison, pray tell me what *is* the matter?"

And between her sobs and bursts of rage Mrs. Levison told her. Bessie listened quite silently, but her eyes sparkled with malice and her heart beat high with triumph.

When Mrs. Levison ceased and withdrew her handkerchief, she gazed appealingly at the girl's impassive face. "Oh, my dear," she moaned, "can't you help me? Is there nothing you could advise?"

For a moment Bessie was silent. Then she said in a low, hard voice, "If you are resolved on this marriage, there is but one thing to do—desperate cases, desperate remedies, you know. I—I hardly like to suggest anything. I know how obstinate Sheba is. Arguments and persuasions are simply wasted on her."

"You are right," groaned Mrs. Levison. "Ah, if Providence had only blessed me with a daughter like you! But what is the suggestion, my dear? I would do anything—*anything* to prevent her marrying this singer."

"Well," said Bessie a little nervously and lowering her voice, "it is simply this; you must get Pharamond to—compromise—her in some way. Then she will be *obliged* to marry him."

Mrs. Levison stared at her. "What do you mean?" she asked, somewhat startled at the boldness of the suggestion.

"It is the only thing to do," said the girl hurriedly, "and it is easily managed. It is often done in France, and a hint would be enough for Pharamond. I could manage it, if you wish. Of course only for *your* sake. I can't bear to see you so unhappy."

"And how is it to be done?" asked Mrs. Levison curiously.

"Simply enough. Give one of your large dinner-parties, and arrange that the count shall stay the night here. That is all."

"But," stammered Mrs. Levison, "my husband will think it odd. We have never asked him to stay before . . . and—he might refuse."

The girl rose and shrugged her handsome shoulders with a gesture of indifference.

"He will not refuse," she said, and a faint colour stained her clear pale skin. "And I thought you asked my advice."

"Yes," said Mrs. Levison almost humbly, "I did—but——"

"If you can suggest anything else, do so," said Bessie coldly. "I know Sheba better than you do. She will never marry this man unless—circumstances force her to do so."

"And you think," said Mrs. Levison, "that you can arrange the—circumstances? I should not like any scandal, you know."

"There will be none," said Bessie with an odd hard smile. "I have read my little plot in a French novel. It is as simple as it is effectual. You can trust me, Mrs. Levison."

"Ah!" sighed that lady with her ever recurring regret, "so clever—so pretty. If *only* you had been my daughter instead of Sheba!"

(To be continued.)

LONDON LETTERS,
TO VARIOUS COUNTRY COUSINS.

No. I.

DEAR COUSINS,

You cannot imagine how the early burst of summer weather has changed the look of things in town. Not only are the trees and shrubs glorified with the freshest of green, but the parks and Piccadilly are all aglow with summer raiment. Heretical as it is to adopt a sunshade before one has carried an *en-tout-cas* for several weeks, some of us have done so in self-defence. Of course, it is as unnatural to do this as it would be to run before one has practised walking for awhile; but then, you see, the weather has been, and still is, delightfully unnatural, and all heterodoxies are forgiven by reason of Nature's pleasant change of plan. This time last year we were cold and dull, suffering from a want of sunshine. These bright days are antidotes to many an ill, but they are a little apt to make one feel tired and languid, coming so suddenly upon the cold.

We all went and sat in the Park yesterday, and were much amused by the kaleidoscopic procession that passed before our eyes. Have the tiny bonnets reached your Miss Chiffon yet? I suppose not. Country milliners are not good at taking in new ideas. To tell them of a fresh fashion is like sowing parsley seed, which is said to go all round the world before it comes up again and reappears above the soil.

As to the absent dress-improver, even the town dressmakers of the second and third class *will* still put it in the gowns they make. I begin to believe that they have forgotten how dresses "went" in the ante-cushion era. Their eyes have become so habituated to the amazing promontory at the back that the human form seems denuded without it. We all three got our new gowns home on Saturday, and though we had enjoined upon Mrs. Whalebone not to put one scrap of cushion or one vestige of steel into the skirts, there were the horrid things almost as large as ever. I was cross, Mary plaintive, and Lucy sad. Seizing the scissors, I immediately cut out the cushion, flung it on the top of the bookcase in my wrath (we must have the step-ladder up to-morrow to fish it down again!) and then I took out the steel. Mary and Lucy follow their usual plan of letting me experiment upon my vile body (in case you do

not know the Latin quotation I may explain that it is not really vile; quite the contrary), and following my example only when it has resulted in a success. They came upstairs with me to see me try the dress on—such a lamentable sight as it was! Having been constructed for subterranean addenda, it would not come right without them, and I was in despair. At last a happy thought struck me. I took about half a yard of stiff muslin and pleated it into the waistband at the back, flattening the pleats as much as possible and allowing them to be about a quarter of a yard in depth. This answers excellently well, and the others have adopted my plan.

I must tell you something amusing that happened to Mary yesterday. She went to the corset maker to have a corset tried on, and objecting to be laced to within an inch of her life, she said: "I cannot bear it so tight as that." The reply was: "If I had known it, miss, I should have declined to make for you. Ladies who do not lace tight do me no credit." Was it not funny? You should have seen Mary's face, divided as it was between laughter and annoyance.

The shops are simply enchanting just now, and every day I walk down Regent Street I spend a large fortune in imagination. The hats are florally seductive, and the cool gowns in foulard and zephyr are simply syren-like. Let me see, however. Did the syrens sing the money out of the men's pockets or wool into their ears? I forget a little about them, but if I have mixed things, you will be sure to forgive me from that fellow-feeling that makes us wondrous kind. We have just got a supply of the new tennis shirts from Barker's, and we look very smart in them. You should invest in a few, for they are one of the latest developments of fashion, and look very pretty under our last year's blazers, which are as good as new. There is no form of economy more laudably economical than that which buys the best of materials and workmanship at the best shops. Is there? We see such quantities of cheap but pretty rubbish in some of the windows here in Kensington, that we used occasionally to be tempted to invest. But a few trials have convinced us that the more a thing costs, at a really good shop, the more value will one get out of it.

The Park is delicious on these bright May mornings, and one sees every possible variety of costume, from wintry furs and velvets to summer jerseys and light-tinted skirts. The Duke of Portland and Miss Dallas-Yorke were a central point of interest yesterday. She was looking very handsome in a Redfern gown of dark grey tweed, a short coat to match, and one of Madame Lili's delicious bonnets, and he wore as blithe an air as a prospective bridegroom should. The wedding is to be in Ascot week, I believe, but it is not yet settled at which church it is to be. St. George's, Hanover Square, is no longer the all fashionable marriage-place it was in the days when its very name was redolent of orange blossoms and bridal garments. St. Peter's, Eaton Square, and St. Paul's,

Knightsbridge, have to a great extent taken its place, and the third ducal wedding of the season may possibly be celebrated at one of these. The bridesmaids are to wear white satin and the loveliest and floweriest of hats.

The Princess of Wales is looking perfectly charming just now, and there was never surely any one who embellished half mourning as she does. The dress she wore in the Park yesterday is worth describing, so well thought out was every detail. It was black velvet, made with a coat bodice of the same, opening over a vest of white moiré silk which was fastened up the centre with very small gilt buttons; on either side of the vest were soft folds of black silk, intervening between it and the velvet jacket, which had buttons of gold and silver, the former metal being raised in relief upon a ground of the former. Her bonnet was of the very smallest kind, with openwork jet brim and crown of tulle, with a bow of narrow black satin ribbon and no other ornaments, save a diamond-hilted sword which supported it at the back.

Three drawing-rooms in May make it a full month for London, and the blocks in Bond Street and Piccadilly are almost constant. Mary is one of those stolid beings who can cross a street just under the noses of two or three horses, while Lucy is addicted to the dangerous habit of rushing half-way across, stopping in the middle and then flying back again, just when the oncoming cabmen had begun to act on the supposition that she was continuing her first intention. I always say that I know exactly how a mother hen feels when her ducklings take to the water, for I endure a variety of emotions watching these two sisters of mine crossing a crowded thoroughfare. My dear country cousins, be advised by an experienced town-dweller and give yourselves in charge to a policeman when you want to cross Piccadilly or Bond Street on a full day. I have never seen a more humiliating spectacle than was offered by two girls the other day. They had got a few paces from the pavement and, being shut out from it by a line of cabs, found themselves prevented from crossing further by a number of vehicles; so there they stood, scarlet with terror, hopping about and uttering the most undignified shrieks, while the cabmen were all convulsed with laughter at their predicament, and with the chivalry of their class endeavoured still further to appal them by stentorian shouts. One's endeavour through life should aim at being "mistress of the situation," and crowded crossings are good practice in the art. A hint to the wise is enough.

I was among the thousands who waited in the Park to-day to see the Queen, and was at last rewarded by a glimpse of Her Most Gracious Majesty, and seeing her bow in her own inimitable way to the greetings of her people.

I expect to have a quantity of news to tell you next month.

C. E. H.

DO NOT CIRCULATE

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